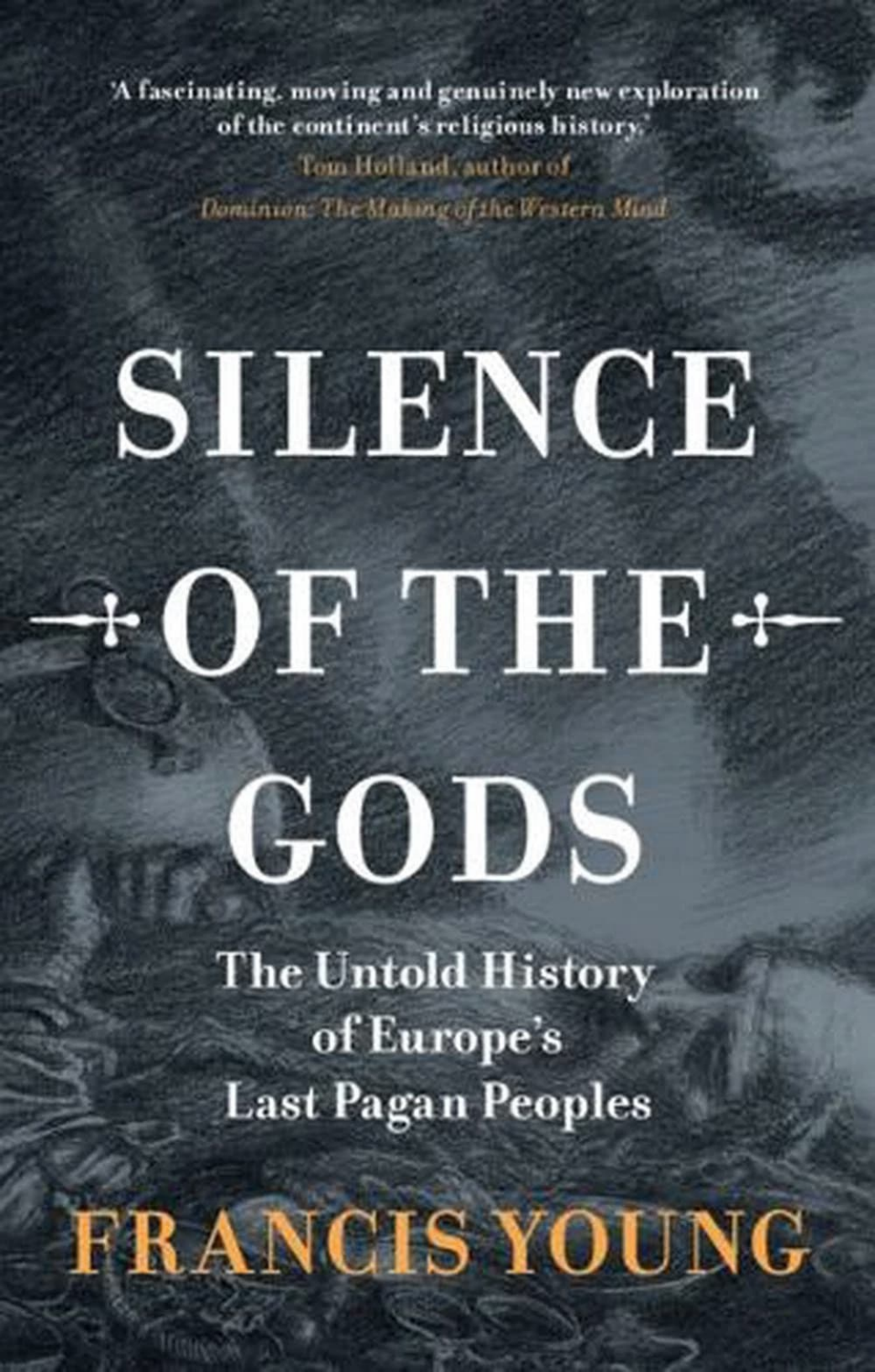

'A fascinating, moving and genuinely new exploration of the continent's religious history.'
Tom Holland, author of
Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind
SILENCE OF THE GODS
The Untold History of Europe's Last Pagan Peoples
FRANCIS YOUNG

SILENCE OF THE GODS

The formal conversion to Christianity in 1387 of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania seemingly marked the end of Europe's last 'pagan' peoples. But the reality was different. At the margins, often under the radar, around the dusky edgelands, pre-Christian religions endured and indeed continued to flourish for an astonishing five centuries. *Silence of the Gods* tells, for the first time, the remarkable story of these forgotten peoples: belated adopters of Christian belief on the outer periphery of Christendom, from the Sámi of the frozen north to the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians around the Baltic, as well as the Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia's Volga-Ural Plain. These communities, Dr Young reveals, responded creatively to Christianity's challenge, but for centuries stopped short of embracing it. His book addresses why this was so, uncovering stories of fierce resistance, unlikely survival, and considerable ingenuity. He revolutionises understandings of the lost religions of the last pagans.

Francis Young grew up in Bury St Edmunds, England, and holds a doctorate in history from the University of Cambridge. He has written over twenty books in the fields of folklore and the history of religion and supernatural belief, including *Pagans in the Early Modern Baltic* (Arc Humanities Press, 2022), *Magic in Merlin's Realm* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), and *Twilight of the Godlings* (Cambridge University Press, 2023). His work has also appeared in *History Today*, *BBC History Magazine*, and *The Catholic Herald*, as well as other periodicals. A regular podcaster, and broadcaster on BBC Radio, he is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and a lay canon of St Edmundsbury Cathedral, and teaches courses in religious history and folklore for the Department for Continuing Education in the University of Oxford.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559

The continuance of pagan religious practices in Christian Europe has attracted considerable interest amongst scholars of medieval and early modern popular religion and contemporary paganists and spiritualists. A significant aspect of this curiosity has been the search for shamanic survivals in the magical beliefs of Eastern and Northern Europe, and the persecution of the Sámi during the era of the witch trials. The likes of Ronald Hutton have tried to reappraise critically the concept of shamanism and its relevance in a European context, and Baltic scholars have explored notions around late paganism and national identity. But there is plenty of scope for providing a wider perspective on the enduring nature of non-Christian faith in the history of the region. Francis Young has carved out a justified reputation for accessible, scholarly research in areas such as the history of exorcism, fairies, and ecclesiastical history, as well as pagan studies. He wears his erudition with a light touch and has an excellent command of early modern Latin manuscripts and texts. With his knowledge of Lithuania and Lithuanian, he is the ideal scholar to be writing on Baltic paganism. His book convincingly argues for the continuance of non-Christian religions in the Baltic and far north and supersedes previous work on the topic in its breadth and scholarship. There is a scholarly and general readership ready and waiting for new, innovative work on European paganisms. This is a welcome, up-to-date, and refreshing history of a thoroughly tantalising subject.

Owen Davies, Professor of Social History,
University of Hertfordshire, author of *Art of the Grimoire: An Illustrated History of Magic Books and Spells* (2023)

Francis Young lifts the veil on a lost world of pre-Christian European religions in their final stages. A fascinating, moving and genuinely new exploration of the continent's religious history.

Tom Holland, author of *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind* (2019)

Francis Young has established himself firmly over the past decade as an independent scholar of manifest ability, with a broad interest in what might be termed the wilder shores of the history of European religion: paganism, witchcraft, occultism, and fairy belief. He writes and argues well, and his work is always solidly based in well-researched primary source material. Moreover, he is one of the few British

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559

historians who knows anything about pre-Christian religion in eastern Europe, having edited a very useful set of primary sources concerning the beliefs of the pagan Baltic peoples. His new book represents in many respects a considerable enlargement of that. It provides the first comprehensive chronological story of the Christianisation of these northern and north-eastern fringe areas of Europe, in a smooth and even coverage. The literary style is always lucid and accessible. It persuasively argues that that this process of Christianisation, at least among the Baltic and Finno-Ugric peoples, was genuinely different from that in the rest of the continent. The result was that in these parts of eastern Europe it started later than elsewhere and lasted a lot longer. This is not something that has been widely understood by Western historians hitherto.

Ronald Hutton, Professor of History,
University of Bristol, author of *Queens of the Wild: Pagan Goddesses in Christian Europe* (2022)

‘Ship Burial’ © Alan Lee

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559

SILENCE OF THE GODS

The Untold History of Europe's Last Pagan Peoples

FRANCIS YOUNG

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009586573

DOI: 10.1017/9781009586559

© Francis Young 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009586559

First published 2025

Printed in the United Kingdom by CPI Group Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-1-009-58657-3 Hardback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

For Jolanta

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559

CONTENTS

List of Plates *page* xiv
Preface xv
List of Abbreviations xx

Introduction 1
Speaking of Pagans 9
Blurred Boundaries: Religion, Animism, Creolisation, and the 'Christianesque' 18
Conversion, Christianisation, and Unchristianised Peoples 30
Histories of 'Pagan' Europe 36
Sources and Hermeneutics 44
Structure and Scope 59

1 **Europe's Unchristianised Edge: Who Were the 'Pagans'?** 61
Christianisation Falters 65
The Northern Crusades and the Renewal of 'Paganism' 73
Bartholomaeus Anglicus: A Thirteenth-Century Friar on the Unchristianised Edge 84
Sápmi: Land of the Midnight Sun 89
Finland and Karelia: Sweden's Pagan Hinterland 95
Estonia: Animists of the Baltic? 97
The Balts: Indo-European Pagans 99
Great Perm: Christianity Reaches a Finno-Ugric People 102

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559

The Mordvins: People of the Great Bend 106
The Chuvashes: At the Edge of Islam 107
The Maris: Animists of Hill and Meadow 109
The Udmurts: In the Shadow of the Urals 110
Conclusion 111

2 Mere Christianisation: Curiosity and Ethnography in the Fifteenth Century 114
Ethnography Reborn 117
Polar Twilight: Christianity in Sápmi? 119
Livonia: From 'Idolatry' to 'Superstition' 123
Prussia: The Distracted Church 126
Samogitia: Quenching Sacred Fires 129
Lithuania: The Church's Youngest Daughter 141
Muscovy Ascending: The Unchristianised East 147
Fortunate Isles? Christianisation and Creole Religion in the Canary Islands 149
Conclusion 159

3 (Counter-)Reformation in Unchristianised Europe: The Sixteenth Century 163
Sápmi and the Reformation: The Taint of Witchcraft 170
Karelia: Imagined Deities? 178
Livonia: Land of Werewolves? 181
Prussia: Fighting Paganism in an Outpost of Lutheranism 191
Lithuania and Samogitia: The Lost Worshippers of Aesculapius? 195
Frontier of Orthodoxy: Muscovite Expansion and Unchristianised Peoples 214
Conclusion 219

4 Antiquarians and Witch-Hunters: The Seventeenth Century 221
Gods of the Witches? 224
The Antiquarians 226
Sápmi: The End of Drum-Time 229
Estonia: Impudent Blasphemy or Sub-Catholic Piety? 242
Prussia: Dying Embers 250
Latvia: Werewolves and Witches, Jesuits and Lutherans 256
Lithuania and Samogitia: The Long Battle against Idolatry 262
Conclusion 276

5 Darkness in Light: Pre-Christian Religion in Enlightenment in Europe 281
Pre-Christian Religion in the Light of Reason 283
Sápmi: Revival and Irreligion in a Land of Wonders 290
Estonia: Failed Integration 296
Latvia: Lingering Idolatry in a Divided Land 302
Lithuania and Samogitia: Holy Trees, Holy Stones 310
The Volga–Ural Region: Conversion as Russification 320
Conclusion 327

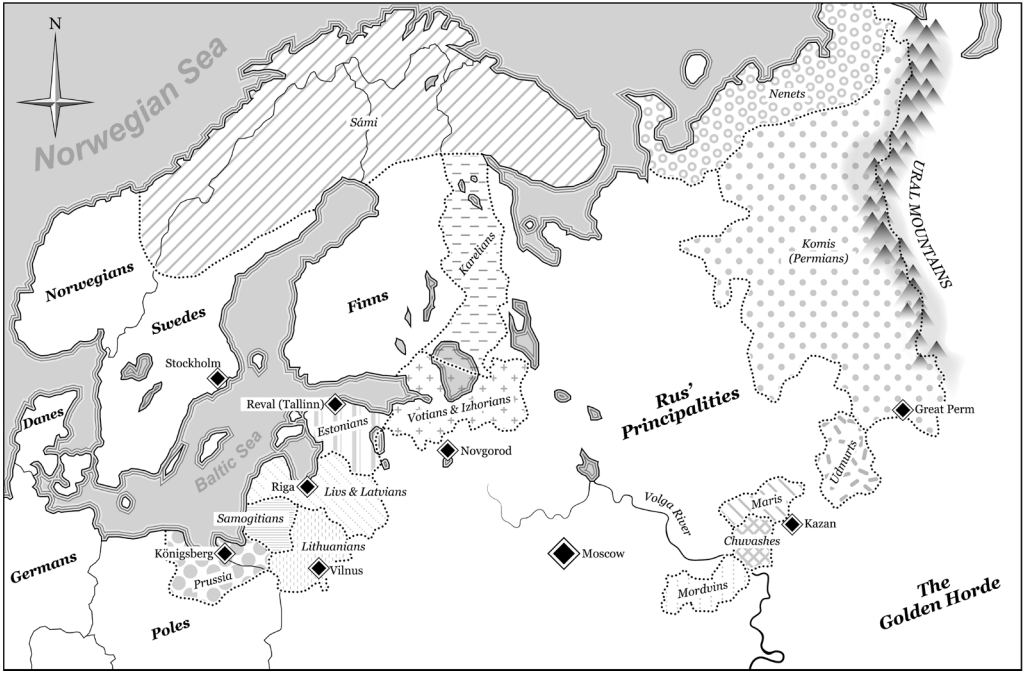
6 Folklore and Fantasy: The Nineteenth-Century Reinvention of Paganism 331
Revaluing and Reviving: Nationalism and the Pagan Past 333
Animist Reformations and Revivals 350

Lingering Traces 358
Conclusion 364

Epilogue: Pre-Christian, Post-Christian? 367

Bibliography 383
Index 412

A plate section will be found between pages 220 and 221.



Unchristianised peoples in northern and eastern Europe, c. 1387. Map drawn by Peter Lorimer

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009086559.001

PLATES

1 *The Baptism of Lithuania* by Władysław Ciesielski (1900)
2 The Zbruch idol (ninth century)
3 Peter of Duisburg's Romuva (1684)
4 A Sámi *luoptte* (sacrificial table) (1673)
5 A sacrifice in an Udmurt village, Russia, July 2015
6 Lithuanian idolaters (1556)
7 An Estonian *hiis* (sacred site): the Tülivere oak in Kuusalu
8 The image of the Virgin of Candelaria in the Basilica of Our Lady of Candelaria on Tenerife
9 'Samoyed' (Nenets) hunters and idolaters (1613)
10 A Sudovian priest prepares to sacrifice a goat
11 *The Night-Hag Visiting Lapland Witches* by Henry Fuseli (1796)
12 Replica of Anders Povelsen's rune drum
13 *Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie* (1622–1686)
14 The 'apparition rock' at Šiluva, Lithuania
15 Sámi people worshipping at a *sieidi* (1724)
16 Portrait of Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778) dressed as a Sámi *noaidi*
17 Sacrificial bowl from the early modern period, found close to a sacred rock at Vaiduloniai, Lithuania
18 Bronisław Trentowski (1808–1869)
19 Teodor Narbutt (1784–1864)
20 The sacred hill and 'altar stone' of Rambynas before its destruction in 1811–1835

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.002

PREFACE

In the summer of 2000 I ate a memorable picnic next to Puntukas, the second largest rock in Lithuania. Puntukas is an enormous glacial erratic, probably carried south from Finland by a glacier in the last ice age and deposited in the middle of the plain that eventually became the forest of Anykščiai. It is not surprising, perhaps, that the ancient Lithuanians came to view this weird intrusion into their forested landscape as sacred; but it did come as a surprise to me to learn that this strange rock close to the geographical centre of Europe (which was later carved with relief portraits of the Lithuanian aviators Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas) may have been a site of pagan worship as late as the eighteenth century. This, and other experiences of Europe's east and north over several years – such as encountering a Sámi *sieidi* in Stockholm's Nordiska Museet that was venerated as recently as the early twentieth century – kindled in me a fascination with the last phase of pre-Christian religion in Europe. Who were these people still practising ancestral religious rites into the eighteenth, nineteenth, and even twentieth centuries? Why were they Christianised so late, compared with other European peoples? And why was the existence of such religions so little discussed in the historiography of European religion? *Silence of the Gods* is an attempt to answer these questions.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.003

While the interaction between Christianity and religions indigenous to the New World in the 'Age of Discovery' is accepted as a defining feature of the period, the fact that early modern European Christians also co-existed with wholly or partially unchristianised peoples in their own continent receives much less attention. Unchristianised peoples who did not follow one of Europe's 'world religions' (Christianity, Judaism, or Islam) are largely absent from most histories of European religion in the early modern period. New historiographies of religion attentive to the diversity of belief have brought a renewed appreciation of the richness of Jewish religious life and the significance of Islam as a European faith, but the unchristianised peoples remain marginal to the story. In one sense, marginal is exactly what they were: their relationship with Christianity was different from that of other European peoples precisely because they were geographically inaccessible. Compared to the followers of 'world religions', their numbers were tiny and ever dwindling. Yet their capacity to cause early modern Europeans existential anxiety vastly exceeded their numbers. Europe was supposed to be a Christian continent; unchristianised people were not supposed to exist, especially within the domains of Christian rulers. The discourses that resulted from this dissonance between theory and reality were of lasting importance to intellectual history, anthropology, and the study of religion.

This book is a religious history of the last five centuries of Europe's unchristianised peoples, who included the Sámi, the Estonians, the Old Prussians, the Latvians, the Lithuanians, the Mordvins, the Maris, the Chuvashes,

and the Udmurts. It spans the period from the official conversion of Lithuania in 1387 to the dawn of the twentieth century: a period when these peoples lived under Christian rule and were often deemed Christians for political purposes, in spite of resolutely following their own religious traditions. *Silence of the Gods* adopts a novel approach to this history in three ways: firstly, by considering Europe's unchristianised peoples together, as part of a continental story rather than just separate national stories; secondly, by making the *peoples* its focus, rather than their belief systems (which can rarely be reliably constructed); and thirdly, by setting aside the problematic concept of 'paganism' for understanding pre-Christian religions. The book argues that, in spite of their diversity – ranging from shamanist Sámi to the tree- and stone-worshipping Balts and the Finno-Ugric forest animists – unchristianised peoples in northern and eastern Europe shared a common experience of encounter with Christian missionaries, whose methods ranged from violent crusade and forced baptism to non-violent efforts at persuasion. That common experience of contact with Christianity produced creative religious and spiritual responses that changed unchristianised peoples forever, but did not always result in the adoption of Christianity itself.

While the 'pagan' peoples of early modern Europe have long fascinated me, the idea of writing this particular book emerged from my participation in a conference dedicated to Johannes Schefferus's book *Lapponia* (1673) at the Arctic University of Norway in Tromsø in May 2023. On that occasion I gave a paper that compared early modern Latin ethnographic writings on Baltic

religion to Schefferus's treatment of Sámi religion – a comparative perspective that was largely novel, since no one (to my knowledge) was studying unchristianised minorities in early modern Europe comparatively or collectively. Instead, scholars of this latest phase of pre-Christian religion in Europe tend to be siloed into national or regional historical specialisms. Beyond those specialisms, the study of unchristianised peoples has been held back by ignorance, disbelief that such religions existed, and disregard for geographically marginal regions. The result has been the exclusion of these peoples from Europe's recent religious history, an omission this book seeks to put right. In doing so, I hope it will shed light on the nature of Christianisation as well as the nature of pre-Christian religions, and indeed I hope it might illuminate something of the nature of human religiosity itself.

I am very grateful to Alex Wright at Cambridge University Press for his willingness to let me explore some of the stranger byways of Europe's history of belief, and for being so supportive and encouraging. I thank the rest of the team at Cambridge University Press for bringing this book to publication, and the book's anonymous reviewers for their constructive and helpful comments. I am grateful to Dr Per Pippin Aspaas and Dr Andreas Klein for organising the conference that inspired me to write this book, and I thank Dr Margaret Hilditch for her occasional interpretations of Russian texts and Dr Nicholas Wilkinson for his useful comments on the Epilogue. I acknowledge with thanks the helpful staff of Cambridge University Library, the British Library, and other libraries whose

digitisation of their manuscripts has greatly aided my research. As always, my greatest debt of gratitude is to my wife Rachel and daughters Abigail and Talitha, for bearing with my commitment to research.

Translations from other languages are my own unless otherwise stated.

ABBREVIATIONS

BRMR	Ališauskas, Vytautas (ed.), *Baltų Religijos ir Mitologijos Reliktai Lietuvos Didžioje Kunigaikštystejė (XIV–XVIII a.): Šaltinių Rinkinys* (Vilnius: Lietuvių Katalikų Mokslo Akademija, 2016)
BRMŠ	Vėlius, Norbertas (ed.), *Baltų Religijos ir Mitologijos Šaltiniai* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir Enciclopedijų Leidykla, 1996–2005), 4 vols.
LBM	Bět'áková, Marta Eva and Blažek, Václav (eds.), *Lexicon of Baltic Mythology* (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2021)
PEMB	Young, Francis (ed.), *Pagans in the Early Modern Baltic: Sixteenth-Century Ethnographic Accounts of Baltic Paganism* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022)
Relationes	Rabikauskas, Paulius (ed.), *Relationes status dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lituaniae* (Rome: Academia Lituana Catholica Scientiarum, 1971)
SSP-CR	Álvarez-Pedrosa, Juan Antonio (ed.), *Sources of Slavic Pre-Christian Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2021)

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559

Introduction

On Ash Wednesday 1387 Grand Duke Jogaila of Lithuania – newly crowned king of Poland and bearing his new polonised Christian name of Władysław Jagiełło – arrived in his capital city of Vilnius. At the time, Vilnius was the capital of a vast polity forged by the Lithuanians from the twelfth century onwards, which reached from the Baltic Sea to the territory of the Crimean Tatars at the edge of the Black Sea; the Grand Duchy of Lithuania took in today's Belarus, parts of Ukraine, and some of what is now western Russia. Fourteenth-century Vilnius was a multi-religious city; there were already Orthodox and Catholic churches there and a Franciscan friary. There may even have been small communities of Jews and Muslim Tatars. But at the heart of the city stood a roofless building, unlike any other in a European capital city. Built as a cathedral over a century earlier, it was now sacred to Perkūnas, the god of thunder, and open to the skies. Six fires burned before a six-sided altar, representing the cycle of the year, where goats were sacrificed to the thunder god.[1] On a hill above the city burned a perpetual fire, attended by a *vaidila* (priest) who divined the future by gazing into the flames.[2] Sacred forests, where it

[1] *LBM*, p. 153.

[2] On the pre-Christian sanctuaries of Vilnius see Vaitkevičius, 'Main Features of the State Religion', pp. 349–53.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.004

was forbidden to fell a tree or hunt animals, surrounded the city, and at the confluence of the Rivers Neris and Vilnia was a sacred site dedicated to the cremation of the mighty dead.

Jogaila laboured for days to convince his people to embrace the Catholic Christian faith. It was no easy task; the Lithuanians had been at war with the Teutonic Knights, a crusading missionary order, for the past century and a half. Refusal to embrace one of the proselytising monotheistic faiths – Latin Catholicism, Greek Orthodox Christianity, or Islam – had become a defining feature of Lithuanian identity. Furthermore, Jogaila's Polish priests had no knowledge of the Lithuanian language and the king himself had to act as translator. However, Jogaila had brought woollen robes which he offered as a gift to anyone who accepted baptism, and eventually the Lithuanians consented to be baptised en masse; the priests organised the converts into huge square formations by sex and sprinkled them with water while baptising everyone in each group with the same Christian name. The perpetual fire was extinguished, the altars were broken, the sacred forests were cut down, and the sacred snakes were killed (Plate 1).[3]

These events marked the official conversion of Europe's last 'pagan' polity, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Christendom was, apparently, triumphant; and the conversion of Lithuania has often been taken as the high-water mark of the long process of conversion of the 'barbarian' peoples outside the Roman Empire that had begun a millennium earlier. It was the end of the imagined 'pagandom'

[3] The most complete account of the conversion of Lithuania is to be found in Jan Długosz's fifteenth-century chronicle, translated in *PEMB*, pp. 45–7.

that menaced Christian Europe. But the reality was rather different. As Jogaila stage-managed political and religious theatre in Vilnius, vast swathes of the continent of Europe remained unchristianised. The Prussians, Latvians, and Estonians, although under the thumb of crusading orders for centuries, had yet to embrace Christianity. Similarly, the Finnic Votians and Izhorians, in the sphere of influence of the Republic of Novgorod, had yet to become Orthodox, and a great swathe of animist peoples inhabited the far north of Fennoscandia and the Volga-Ural region in the far east of the Continent: the Sámi, the Karelians, the Nenets people, the Komis, the Maris, the Udmurts, the Mordvins, and the Chuvashes (to name just a few). At the level of geopolitics, the conversion of northern Europe to Christianity was indeed achieved at the end of the fourteenth century, and if history is only about the actions and decisions of 'great men', then that is all that matters. But in reality, many European peoples remained wholly or partly unchristianised for centuries thereafter. This book is about them.

There is a long history of fascination with 'pagan survivals' in modern historiography, beginning with a new Enlightenment attitude to religion in the eighteenth century as a culturally constructed phenomenon – a shift of attitude that will be explored in more detail in Chapter 5. Historians, ethnographers, and antiquarians became more willing to consider all religions on equal terms; and then the nineteenth century brought the advent of the disciplines of anthropology and folklore, which at the time were dominated by the idea that modern folklore and customs encoded impossibly ancient information about pre-Christian religions. Nationalism

and secularism came together to render the imagined pagans of the past fascinating: idealised exemplars of nationhood who had existed before the cultural distortions imposed by colonisers and the imported faith of Christianity. The effect of all this was to make northern Europe's long-vanished pagans into celebrities to rival the long-admired pagans of Greece and Rome: the druids of Gaul, Britain, and Ireland; the heathen Vikings of Scandinavia; the Germanic pagans of Wagnerian opera; and, for those who bought into the theories of Margaret Murray, the 'pagan' witches of early modern Europe.

In the midst of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' celebration of all things pagan, and the earnest search for 'pagan survivals' in everything from Morris dancing to nursery rhymes, the fact that pre-Christian religious practices endured into the early modern period in some parts of Europe was overlooked. This was, in large part, for historical and cultural reasons. Most of the peoples discussed in this book, with the notable exception of the Sámi of northern Fennoscandia, were then located within the borders of the transcontinental Russian Empire and were thus often excluded from discussions focussed on western Europe. Furthermore, nationalism inclined scholars to seek the evidence of 'pagan survivals' in their own nations and not to look further afield. And it was hard for scholars from far-flung corners of Europe to make their voices heard in a discourse dominated by German, British, French, or Italian scholars. Then, in the second half of the twentieth century, a new discourse of 'paganism' emerged, focussed on the revival (or reinvention) of pre-Christian religions in new religious movements – a discourse that sometimes pushed to one side the actual evidence for

pre-Christian religions in favour of romanticised interpretations that matched the visions of revivalists.

The effect of all of this was to leave the story of the last phase of pre-Christian religion in early modern Europe largely untold, outside of those countries where it mattered as part of their national story. The purpose of *Silence of the Gods* is to provide a religious history of Europe's last unchristianised peoples for the last five centuries of their existence. These peoples, and their religions, deserve more from historians than they have hitherto received; they deserve to be considered as more than an undifferentiated religious 'other' which Christianity displaced. For their history, if it has been told at all, has often been subsumed within a historiography of Christian mission and conversion, where the identities and beliefs of practitioners of pre-Christian religions were often left vague, or were unlocated in historical time – or imaginatively inferred from later folklore, rather than examined on the basis of contemporary documentary evidence.

No book could ever give a complete account of the pre-Christian religions of all European peoples who were still in existence in the early modern period, because there is simultaneously too much evidence and too little: too little historical evidence to give a clear picture of the true variety and structure of religious beliefs, and too much evidence to be teased from unreliable and mercurial sources like later folklore. But Europe's unchristianised peoples were not wholly voiceless, with their beliefs and practices reported only by hostile Christian sources. It is true that these peoples are glimpsed mainly through a complex matrix of interpretation by Christians, but their voices do feature sporadically in missionary and disciplinary records

from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[4] Europe's unchristianised peoples were neither passive recipients of ancient religious traditions from the distant past nor passive victims of Christianisation. They were as capable of agency and creativity in their belief systems as anyone else, and their beliefs underwent change and evolution during the early modern period. Unchristianised peoples rejected, ignored, or incorporated elements of Christianity into their religious outlooks on their own terms. That they were able to do so owed a great deal to the remoteness of their homelands and the rudimentary nature of ecclesiastical organisation and mission at Europe's unchristianised edge, but it also speaks to a desire to innovate and respond to the changing world in which they lived.

The late date at which the final Christianisation of these peoples was attempted means that we are able to view their pre-Christian beliefs through the eyes of Renaissance humanists and Enlightenment *philosophes* who were reaching towards more modern methods of ethnography. The collision of modernity with pre-Christian religion offers the tantalising possibility that such detailed ethnographic testimonies bear witness to religious traditions and outlooks that were once much more widespread – a glimpse, as it were, of the otherwise lost pre-Christian religious heritage of all northern Europe. But early modern commentators also channelled their own concerns and anxieties into their writings, revealing as much about themselves and their own time as about the peoples they set out to describe. Not only was everything we know about pre-Christian peoples in this

[4] Bumblauskas, 'Samogitia's Christianisation', p. 12.

period written down by Christians, but Christianity and literacy almost always arrived together – so that the historian necessarily glimpses pre-Christian religion in the moment of its overthrow, as it were. The act of observation was entangled with the act of destruction.

The one historical fact that overshadows any history of Europe's last unchristianised peoples is that, almost without exception, these peoples eventually *were* Christianised; that is to say, they internalised Christianity as part of their national identities. This book is thus about the end of a phenomenon (pre-Christian religion), which largely disappeared during the period it considers. As Pierre Chuvin observed of the last pagans of Rome, 'it is much easier to point out the first time an event occurred than the last'.[5] But it is not the aim of this book to identify Europe's 'last pagan'; that would be a fruitless exercise, and it assumes an absoluteness to religious identities in this period that does not reflect the reality. Ambiguity about who exactly might be considered a Christian or not is an unavoidable feature of this history, rather than a problem to be eliminated – and it is partly to accommodate that ambiguity that I choose to write of 'unchristianised peoples' rather than 'pagans'. Describing peoples as 'unchristianised' does not require us to imagine they were completely untouched by Christianity, or that they defined themselves against Christianity, as describing them as 'pagan' might. Large elements of Christianity might have been incorporated into their worldview, but the pre-Christian past was still a presence in the memory of the community. These peoples were, in other words, only shallowly Christianised; deep

[5] Chuvin, *Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, p. 2.

Christianisation (a concept I discussed in my earlier book *Twilight of the Godlings*[6]) involves a degree of cultural forgetting of pre-Christian traditions, so that folk religion involves the creative reinterpretation of a Christian cosmology rather than the incorporation of 'pagan survivals'.

Early modern Europe's unchristianised peoples were small in number, scattered in distribution, and generally politically powerless. Nevertheless, they mattered well beyond their own regions because learned and powerful elites were deeply concerned about their continuing existence. Rulers and churchmen fretted about the 'last pagans' within their dominions. The conversion of all peoples was central to Christian belief,[7] and the Christianisation of all peoples within a given territory according to the ruler's religious preference was essential to post-Reformation understandings of sovereignty. Furthermore, the pre-Christian peoples of Europe, whether the Guanches of the Canary Islands or the Samogitians of the Baltic, became the ideological proving ground for European responses to Indigenous peoples in the New World that would ultimately challenge everything human beings thought they knew about themselves, with repercussions that continue to this day in urgent debates about the legacy of colonisation and Indigenous rights.

Furthermore, like the decline of the Roman Empire, which allowed for the emergence of the early medieval world, the decline of Europe's pre-Christian religions seeded something new. The nineteenth-century's

[6] Young, *Twilight of the Godlings*, pp. 159–60.

[7] Cf. Colossians 1:23: 'be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven …'.

reinterpretation of pre-Christian cultures, considered in Chapter 6, led to the rise of nationalism and movements for national rebirth in central and eastern Europe that produced many of the nations of the region, influencing geopolitics to this day. Furthermore, the position of national minorities within the Russian Federation – many of whom are considered in this book – is a matter of considerable contemporary interest as a volatile Russia's medium- and long-term political future remains seemingly in the balance. As Christianity loses its religious and cultural hold on Europe, there is understandably an upswell of popular curiosity about what came before it, especially if pre-Christian peoples are perceived as having lived in harmony with a natural environment that is now in crisis. While Europe's pre-Christian religions ultimately faded from history, their memory became part of the material for newly fashioned identities, and that material remains a significant (if at times problematic) part of Europe's cultural fabric. It is impossible to understand the totality of early modern European history without including unchristianised peoples in the story.

Speaking of Pagans

There is a long-standing debate among scholars of religious studies, as well as historians, about the use of the word 'pagan' to describe pre-Christian European cults.[8]

[8] For some discussions of the use of the term 'pagan' see O'Donnell, '*Paganus*', 163–9; Chuvin, *Chronicle of the Last Pagans*, pp. 7–9; Palmer, 'Defining Paganism', 402–25; Davies, *Paganism*, pp. 1–6; Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*, pp. 14–25; Testa, 'When the Romans became *Pagani*', pp. 31–51.

Scholars who reject the use of the word 'pagan' generally do so because it is an 'othering' term invented by Christians in order to define Christianity against what it was not. On this view, 'pagan' is a pejorative term; but it is also a meaningless one, since anyone who was not a Christian (or who failed to meet a required standard of 'Christian-ness') could be called a pagan. It was not a word that anyone ever used of themselves. I have argued elsewhere that rejection of the word 'pagan' on these grounds is problematic,[9] not least because there *are* now people who call themselves pagans and identify with the pre-Christian religions of the past. Furthermore, 'pagan' is among those terms in the history of belief, like 'religion', 'magic', and 'witchcraft', that stubbornly resist unproblematic definition, but that non-specialists continue to use anyway. While the use of such terms should always be subject to critique and appropriate qualification, I take the view that abandoning a widely recognised and widely used term altogether requires exceptional justifications – not least because historians have little hope of communicating their ideas to the wider public if they decline to use commonly understood terminology.

While it is true that 'pagan' was (until very recent times) an exonym or etic term for a group of people defined by an external authority (the Christian church), the extent to which that definition was arbitrary should not be exaggerated. As we shall see, 'pagan' was a term used both technically and rhetorically by late medieval and early modern Christians. While it may not always be apparent that, in the heat of argument and polemic, the

[9] Young and Douglas, *Paganism Persisting*, pp. 4–9.

'rhetorical pagan' and the 'technical pagan' were always clearly distinguished, theologians certainly retained the capacity to distinguish them. In the rhetorical sense, heretics, apostates, exceptionally ignorant Christians, and people forbidden from receiving the rites of the church under interdict or excommunication – and, later, people accused of witchcraft – might be called 'pagans'. But in the technical sense that these people were baptised and therefore stood under the authority of the church's canon law, they were not pagans. In the eyes of the church, baptism claimed a person for Christianity, regardless of that person's level of understanding or catechesis, and a pagan in the technical sense was any unbaptised person who was not a Jew.

Where medieval theologians disagreed about the status of a group of people as pagans or not was in discussions of Islam, where interpretations were divided between those who considered Islam a kind of Christian heresy and those who believed Muslims were pagan idolaters.[10] Derived from the ninth-century author Nicetas of Byzantium,[11] and incorporating the libel that Muslims worshipped a trinity of false gods as idols (including 'Mahumet'), the belief that Muslims were pagans provided a convenient justification for the Crusades, since pagans could be blamed for the death of Christ.[12] Furthermore, the 'paganisation' of Muslims headed off troubling questions about how another successful proselytising monotheistic

[10] On the interpretation of Muslims as heretics see Frasetto, 'The Image of the Saracen', pp. 83–96. On Muslims as pagans see Tolan, 'Muslims as Pagan Idolaters', pp. 97–118.

[11] Cruz, 'Popular Attitudes toward Islam', p. 77.

[12] Tolan, 'Muslims as Pagan Idolaters', pp. 108–9.

religion with equally exclusive claims to divine favour could exist. However, since the Qur'an plainly referenced the Old Testament and mentioned Jesus, Islam could also be written off as a peculiar kind of Christian heresy.

While Christian attitudes to Islam lie beyond the scope of this book, the purported reasons *why* many medieval Christian commentators considered Muslims to be pagans bear examination. In addition to being unbaptised, Muslims were also pagans on account of their alleged idolatry and polytheism. Again and again, Christian authors associated paganism with the worship of idols and the veneration of multiple deities – with good reason, for the ultimate authority for the Christian definition of paganism was the Bible (even if the Latin Vulgate never once uses the word *paganus*). In the Old Testament, the Israelites and their leaders are repeatedly deemed to have fallen away from God when they turn to the worship of 'strange gods', 'the gods of the nations', or 'the idols of the nations'.[13] Since the prophets of ancient Israel were reacting against a particular kind of non-Yahwistic religion, that Canaanite religion became the blueprint for the kind of paganism Christians expected to encounter – along with the paganism of the ancient Graeco-Roman world whose collision with Christianity is described in the Acts of the Apostles.[14] Christians thus expected to find pagans worshipping at temples, sacrificing animals (and perhaps even people), and venerating valuable cult images as actual deities. The Christian reinvention of

[13] See, for example, Deuteronomy 6:14; 13:7; 29:18; 2 Kings 16:3; 17:11; 1 Kings 17:33.
[14] Petts, *Pagan and Christian*, p. 78.

Islam as idolatrous paganism was a particularly extreme form of a broader pattern of Christians interpreting every non-Christian religion they encountered via a scriptural hermeneutic.

The principal reason I have chosen not to use the term 'pagan' in this book without careful qualification (preferring 'pre-Christian' or 'unchristianised') is that 'pagan' fails to do justice to the variety of beliefs and rites present in European societies before Christianisation – even if I do not think it is not a term that should be avoided altogether. The word 'pagan' evokes certain associations. Traditionally, those are associations with Greece and Rome, with its polytheistic pantheon of deities, temples, animal sacrifice, and anthropomorphic cult images. Put another way, 'pagan' is a word that triggers a latent hermeneutic of *interpretatio Romana*, where every pre-Christian society is judged against the implicit standard of the pagan society we know most about: Graeco-Roman antiquity. In more recent times 'pagan' is a word that has arguably acquired other connotations too: positive ones, such as an association with the uninhibited celebration of life, sexual liberation, and closeness to nature.[15] This too is a problem: it is every bit as unhistorical to project the attitudes and ideals of contemporary paganism back onto the pre-Christian peoples of the past as it is to expect all those peoples to behave like Greeks and Romans.

The peoples whose religious history is the subject of this book deserve to be unburdened from some of the

[15] On the changing meanings and associations of the word 'pagan' in twentieth-century Britain and Ireland see Wheeler, 'Discourses of Paganism', 5–24.

unspoken assumptions that a word like 'pagan' carries with it. Their spiritual beliefs and practices were often very far from any template offered by Greece or Rome. In most cases, by the time we have any evidence for the pre-Christian religions of northern and eastern Europe those religions were perceived as marginalised and in decline. The temptation, therefore, has been to lump them all together. These people were 'pagans', 'animists', 'shamanists'. To the Russians they were all 'Chuds', a generic mass of Finno-Ugric-speaking animists. But the religious diversity of Europe's pre-Christian religions, like the diversity of its languages, was vast; and even if it is often now impossible to recover the true extent of that diversity, it deserves to be acknowledged. The limitations of our sources mean we can only glimpse the richness of the tapestry of Europe's later pre-Christian religions, but enough evidence survives to show that it is very difficult to generalise about the beliefs of different peoples. The use of a generalising term like 'pagan' suggests a lack of imagination, funnelling us towards an interpretation of pre-Christian religions as nothing more than lingering survivals from an earlier era and implicitly excluding the possibility that these religions were capable of change and development too.

Potential alternatives to 'pagan' and 'paganism' include 'pre-Christian religion', 'Indigenous religion', 'native faith', and 'ethnic religion'. In a study of the terms used to describe Sámi religion, Konsta Kaikkonen has been critical of the term 'pre-Christian' on the grounds that it clearly locates a religion in the past. In Kaikkonen's view, the use of 'shamanism' is similarly problematic, since it is socially constructed and 'irons out differences between

all "shamanistic" cultures and simply sees them as sides of the same phenomenon'.[16] Vladimir Shumkin questioned the uncritical application of a model derived from Siberia to the Sámi *noaidi* (in Sámi culture, a person who communicates with the spirit world), arguing for greater cultural distinctiveness.[17] Ronald Hutton added a further qualification to the term 'shamanism', noting that shamanism is only one aspect of the religious outlooks in which shamans operate, and therefore it might not be appropriate to characterise an entire religion by that one practice.[18]

As an alternative to earlier terms, Kaikkonen suggests the use of 'Sámi autochthonous religion'; or, alternatively, 'a more particularistic type of approach' that uses purely Sámi terms like *Noaidevuohta*.[19] Clearly, the adoption of such 'particularistic' terms gives a more distinctive identity to a people's religion and avoids the danger of lumping all non-Christian religions together as one undifferentiated mass of 'pagan', 'animist', or 'pre-Christian' beliefs. However, if we are concerned with redressing the marginalisation of Europe's pre-Christian religions, 'particularism' is not necessarily the right way to go. It makes it harder to talk about these religions, and it risks the 'Balkanisation' of pre-Christian religions through the use of particularising language that makes it impossible to speak of common themes or connections – thereby hampering the spread of knowledge and understanding of pre-Christian religious traditions beyond one region. I have already highlighted the difficulty of generalising

[16] Kaikonen, 'Sámi Indigenous(?) Religion(s)(?)', pp. 11–12.
[17] Shumkin, 'The Wizards of Lapland', p. 126.
[18] Hutton, *Shamans*, pp. vii–viii.
[19] Kaikonen, 'Sámi Indigenous(?) Religion(s)(?)', p. 10.

about pre-Christian religions, but there is also solidarity to be found in appropriately qualified generalisations, provided facile comparisons are avoided. And there is, of course, one experience that unites all the diverse pre-Christian religions of medieval and early modern Europe: the experience of contact with Christianity and attempted Christianisation.

Terms like 'Indigenous' and 'autochthonous' are problematic because the application of the concept of indigeneity (developed primarily in the Americas) to Europe remains controversial.[20] While there is no authoritative definition of what constitutes an Indigenous people, influential definitions often highlight the colonisation of the territories of Indigenous peoples by settler societies rather than simply the 'autochthony' of Indigenous peoples as the earliest known inhabitants of a region.[21] There is a debate in Estonia, for example, about whether the Estonians – repeatedly colonised by Baltic German, Danish, Swedish, and Russian settlers, and most recently by the Soviet Union – should consider themselves (and be considered) an Indigenous people, and a rhetoric

[20] 'Protocol No. 3 on the Sami People' of the accession treaty of Sweden and Finland to the European Union (1995) implicitly identifies the Sámi as Indigenous, without using the term itself, by committing Sweden and Finland to protection of Sámi reindeer husbandry as the traditional Sámi way of life. See https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dfb35a66f00d54ab0729b75/t/5e7a2c6aa2bf8526c3fa9bb6/1585065067737/Protocol_3_EU95_original.pdf, accessed 31 January 2024.

[21] For one such definition, see Anaya, *Indigenous Peoples*, p. 3: 'Living descendants of pre-invasion inhabitants of lands now dominated by others. They are culturally distinct groups that find themselves engulfed by other settler societies born of forces of empire and conquest.'

of 'indigeneity' is part of the self-understanding of the 'native faith' Maausulised movement.[22] But in the extension of the concept of indigeneity to Europe there is a latent danger of the appropriation of the term by far-right ultra-nationalist groups, potentially allowing any group that claims 'autochthony' to define itself as 'Indigenous' and re-articulate xenophobic nationalisms in terms of 'Indigenous rights'.

'Pre-Christian religions' is, in my view, the least problematic and most readily understandable term which can be meaningfully deployed to identify the historic belief systems of the Sámi, the Finno-Ugric-speaking animists of European Russia, the Estonians, the Balts, and others. It is a term that leaves open the possibility of vast differences within and between those belief systems, in contrast to 'paganism' (with its Graeco-Roman associations) or 'animism' (which may not accurately characterise the belief systems of all these peoples). It allows for the exploration of both the general and the particular. In a discussion of teaching about Sámi religion in Norwegian schools, Bengt-Ove Andreassen and Torjer Olsen are hesitant about the term 'pre-Christian', noting that it pushes Sámi religion into the past and places Christianity in a central position.[23] But this is not the only way to interpret the term. It is undeniable that Sámi religion, along with every other form of pre-Christian religion in Europe, has come into contact with and been affected by Christianity (or Islam). To refer to a religion as 'pre-Christian' is to acknowledge that a relationship with Christianity is part

[22] Västrik, 'In Search of Genuine Religion', pp. 143–5.
[23] Andreassen and Olsen, 'Sami Religion', p. 74.

of the history of these religions, yet it does not presume priority for Christianity. Indeed, the term 'pre-Christian', as used in this book, grants ontological priority to religious traditions that preceded Christianity; it refers not just to a pristine state of religion before any contact with Christianity, but to any religious practices in a society before its thorough Christianisation. It is shorthand, in other words, for 'pre-Christianisation' religions.

Blurred Boundaries: Religion, Animism, Creolisation, and the 'Christianesque'

While it may be possible to recognise some commonalities with Graeco-Roman religion in the religious concerns of the animists of Europe's far north and east, the differences are more pronounced than the similarities. Animism (and indeed shamanism) cannot and should not be lumped in with 'paganism'.[24] For the purpose of a recent study of the Komi people of European Russia, the Estonian scholars Art Leete and Piret Koosa defined animism as 'an animal- and spirit-related mode of vernacular sensitivity, a complex way of perception, thought, and action that encompasses human and other-than-human persons'.[25] Clearly, nothing about this definition necessarily requires polytheism, sacrifice, temples, cult images, and so forth. Indeed, it is not altogether clear from this definition that animism need be considered 'religion'

[24] For a discussion of possible meanings of 'animism' see Harvey, *Animism*, pp. 3–29. The idea that animism existed in ancient Graeco-Roman religion has been critiqued by Ailsa Hunt (Hunt, 'Pagan Animism', pp. 137–52).

[25] Leete and Koosa, 'Spiritual Power', p. 518 n.1.

at all. As Graham Harvey has observed, scholars now generally reject definitions of animism in terms of belief ('belief in spirits', for example), preferring to see it in terms of 'a concern with knowing how to behave appropriately towards persons, only some of whom are human'.[26] Madis Arukask, in a study of Finno-Ugric-speaking herdsmen in Russia, puts the emphasis on partnership between human beings and the forest and supernatural forces, leading to a 'contractual' relationship.[27] The animist outlook is thus the opposite of the modern Western interpretation of humanity's relationship with nature as adversarial, expressed through metaphors of conflict and conquest.

'Religion' is a term that is notoriously difficult to define. But animism (as usually conceptualised) differs significantly from both Christian and Graeco-Roman modes of religiosity, not least because its concerns are seemingly different from those of religion. It is perhaps because animism 'flies under the radar' of religion that animism manages to co-exist in some societies and individuals with the public profession of Christianity or Islam. Emma Wilby and Michael Ostling have argued for the idea that animism is in some sense more fundamental than religion, a kind of 'bedrock' of popular belief that can continue to exist beneath layers of religion, resilient to religious changes.[28] To use an analogy from linguistics, animism could be seen as a cultural 'substrate' to most societies,

[26] Harvey, *Animism*, p. xi.

[27] Arukask, 'Sorcery, Holiness, the Third Sex', p. 176.

[28] On the idea of animism as a substratum or 'bedrock' of popular belief see Wilby, *Cunning-Folk and Familiar Spirits*, pp. 14–17; Ostling, 'Introduction', pp. 19–20.

perhaps long since extinct in and of itself, but nevertheless detectable in later religious and ritual vocabularies. In 2014 a Mari woman, Nastia Aiguzina, told a BBC journalist that 'In the morning people might attend church and in the afternoon visit the sacred forests.'[29] I had a similar conversation in 2023 with a professor of Sámi language at the University of Tromsø in Norway, who noted that many Sámi people who identify as Lutheran Christians may ask permission of the spirits before lighting a fire or camping in a specific place in the landscape. At one time such phenomena were conceptualised as 'dual-faith observance',[30] but this missed the point that religion and animism do not co-exist as equivalents. Animist traditions may not interact with religious beliefs at all, and the perception that animism is 'pagan' or in potential conflict with the profession of Christianity is externally projected by academics, journalists, or missionaries onto societies in which animism still remains significant; it may not be a tension felt by animists themselves.

On the other hand, by defining animism as something other than religion we may risk perpetuating, in a different form, the sort of closed thinking about religion that caused missionaries to despise the practices of animist peoples. While animism need not compete with Christianity within a Christianised society, and its presence need not be seen as indicative of some sort of conscious compromise or syncretism, excluding it from the category of religion altogether risks denigrating or

[29] Stratton, 'The people with the reddest hair in the world', *BBC News*, 11 November 2014, bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-29950844, accessed 30 September 2023.

[30] See Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 56.

demoting it. The continued presence or absence of animism in a society can perhaps be taken as a measure of the depth or cultural thoroughgoingness of that society's Christianisation – in the sense that Christianity typically becomes a more and more 'culturally totalising' presence in a society over time. This is not because the adoption of Christianity necessarily *requires* the thorough Christianisation of every aspect of life, but because the abandonment of traditional religions can result, over time, in a collective forgetting of the pre-Christian context for those cultural practices, and thus they are furnished with new Christian contexts and rationalisations. A good example would be Ilgės or Vėlinės, the 'Lithuanian Day of the Dead', which in all likelihood has pre-Christian origins, but has now merged into the mainstream of traditional commemorations of the departed that are common in many Christian countries in late October and early November, clustering around the feast of All Saints.

The continued presence of elements of animistic belief and practice in a society could be taken as a sign that its Christianisation is fairly recent, or that it was not wholly successful for a long time. Timothy Insoll has argued that the *identification* of a society with Christianity (or, looked at another way, a society's *self-identification* as a Christian society) can take a long time, and it is the final stage of Christianisation.[31] As Hutton has argued, Christianity was not always immediately successful in supplying substitute beliefs for every aspect of pre-Christian religion. Christianity is a religion primarily concerned with the soul's eternal destiny rather than with the pragmatic

[31] Insoll, 'Introduction', pp. 1–32.

realities of life in a rural subsistence society, or indeed a nomadic society based on hunting and foraging. As Hutton puts it, 'the sheer otherworldliness of Christianity … forced medieval people to retain memories of ancient pagan beliefs in order to cope with the present world'.[32] The persistence of animism and the retention of other pre-Christian beliefs and practices may not, therefore, be indicative of any kind of conscious departure or dissent from Christianity. Rather, it reflects the necessity of navigating the personhood of non-human beings as part of one's perception of reality.

Just as 'animism' can prove a problematic concept, so the concepts of 'crypto-religion' and 'syncretism' are not altogether satisfactory for dealing with the presence of older beliefs and practices in a society alongside Christianity. The phrase 'crypto-religion' seems to imply that older beliefs must be concealed beneath a veneer of Christian devotional practices – which is by no means always the case[33] – while the concept of 'syncretism' implies that older beliefs survive primarily by being assumed into or synthesised with the dominant religion (or at least its popular expressions). John Marenbon has argued that it is perfectly possible for people to inhabit more than one tradition or conceptual scheme without synthesising them,[34] and our need to see a synthesis of belief in other societies may say more about us than it does about them. In other words, because a post-Enlightenment mindset renders us incapable of inhabiting more than one world

[32] Hutton, *Queens of the Wild*, p. 37.

[33] For a critique of the concept of 'crypto-religion' see Robbins, 'Crypto-Religion', pp. 408–24.

[34] Marenbon, 'Relativism in the Long Middle Ages', p. 348.

of belief without consciously synthesising or harmonising them, we imagine that it is so for everyone else. But there is no good reason to suppose that unchristianised peoples were insincere (or set out to deceive) in their incorporation of elements of Christianity into their religious practices, and no evidence that they deliberately and cynically relabelled gods and goddesses in order to evade the attention of church authorities.

On the other hand, there is evidence that unchristianised peoples often populated a partially pre-Christian framework of belief with Christian characters during the Christianisation process, as one possible intermediate stage between pre-Christian cult and thorough Christianisation. These, in the words of Tuuli Kurisoo and Tõnno Jonuks, are the people 'who use Christian symbolism while living in a pagan society', like medieval Estonians who happily wore jewellery featuring crosses long before it is likely that any conversion had taken place,[35] or the early Anglo-Saxon leader buried in Sutton Hoo's Mound 1 in the seventh century with a mixture of pagan and Christian artefacts. At an early stage of their contact with Christianity, people might retain a pre-Christian outlook based on polytheism, sacrifice, and the placation of deities, yet choose to sacrifice to the Christian god and the saints as well on the grounds that the Christian God was a powerful deity worthy of worship – in the absence of any understanding of Christianity's radical claims of exclusivity for its deity.

I have argued elsewhere that worship of Jesus as one god among many may explain some of the more baffling

[35] Kurisoo and Jonuks, 'To Be or Not to Be …', p. 82.

archaeological evidence for religion in late Roman Britain,[36] and the popularity of Christian imagery on early modern Sámi drums has been interpreted in much the same way: the addition of a Christian cast of characters to an existing set of beliefs.[37] To argue endlessly about whether those who have adopted the supernatural personnel of Christianity (God the Father, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the saints) but show no apparent commitment to monotheism are 'Christians' or 'pagans' is to miss the point and deal in essentialist conceptions of religious allegiance that fail to do justice to the fluidity and creativity of an era of religious transition. If a puppeteer adds puppets of Marvel superheroes to a traditional Punch and Judy Show that does not make the puppet show part of the Marvel franchise. In medieval and early modern Europe 'there could have been "Christians" who had nothing to do with the "real" Christianity'[38] – people who identified with Christian imagery and Christian religious figures before they understood anything of what it meant. As Kurisoo and Jonuks note, we do not really have a word for this sort of relationship with Christianity,[39] although I propose we could refer to it as the 'Christianesque': a cosmetic adoption of features of Christianity without adoption of the Christian faith in a way recognisable to the church authorities. And just as there were 'Christianesque' unchristianised people incorporating Christian themes into pre-Christian belief worldviews and belief systems, there were also 'paganesque'

[36] Young, *Twilight of the Godlings*, pp. 122–3.
[37] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', p. 272.
[38] Kurisoo and Jonuks, 'To Be or Not to Be …', p. 83.
[39] Kurisoo and Jonuks, 'To Be or Not to Be …', p. 87.

Christians who continued to use pre-Christian rites but whose overall belief system was Christian, to the point where, in Slavic lands, even Christian priests participated in 'paganesque' rites.[40]

The phenomenon of the 'Christianesque' is closely linked to another idea central to the argument of this book: the concept of religious creolisation. The idea of creoles arose first in linguistics to describe new languages formed in a colonial context from the interaction of Indigenous and colonial languages, and the corresponding concept of religious creolisation was initially developed to understand the complex religious traditions of people of African descent in the Caribbean and Latin America; for North America, the term *métisisation* might also be used, in reference to the new Métis culture created by a fusion of French settler and Native American traditions. However, the creole paradigm is increasingly applied by archaeologists and ancient historians to the religions of ancient Europe. In the same way that a linguistic creole is a stable new language developed from the combination of elements of two interacting languages, so that it can no longer be accurately described as a variant form of either one of those two languages, the creole religions of black communities in Caribbean and Latin America cannot be described satisfactorily as manifestations of either Christianity or African traditional religions. A third religion has come into being as a result of contact and interaction between multiple traditions.[41]

[40] Álvarez-Pedrosa and Marinas, *Rituals in Slavic Pre-Christian Religion*, p. 88.

[41] On religious creolisation see Fernández Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, *Creole Religions*, pp. 1–8.

The concept of creole religion as a sort of religious bricolage undermines the traditional Christian–pagan binary in the historiography of European religion. Whereas the ideas of 'crypto-religion' and syncretism presuppose the interaction of two distinct religious traditions in a dynamic of dissembling and conscious compromise, the paradigm of creolisation allows for something more organic and more fluid: the emergence of a new system of ritual and belief from cross-cultural interactions. The Christianisation of Europe can thus be reimagined as an interplay between *three* religious traditions – Christianity itself, the largely unrecoverable religions of peoples untouched by Christianity, and various creole traditions developed in response to contact with Christianity but prior to complete Christianisation. The re-conceptualisation of pre-Christian religious traditions as creole religions enables the historian to break free of the assumption that the religious beliefs and practices of unchristianised peoples in Europe always had their roots in the distant past. For example, some scholars have suggested that the Samogitian god of merchants Markopollus, first mentioned in the sixteenth century, could have been a corruption of the name of the explorer Marco Polo,[42] and nineteenth-century folklorists noted that Latvians had added a new goddess, 'Mother of Tobacco', to the many Latvian divine mothers.[43]

The archaeologists Ralph Haeussler, Elizabeth Webster, and Jane Webster have been among the first to apply the paradigm of creolisation to the religions of Europe,

[42] *LBM*, p. 124. [43] *LBM*, p. 126.

albeit in ancient rather than modern times.[44] For these scholars, creolisation provides a better framework than 'Romanisation' to describe the transformation of local cults in the provinces of the Roman Empire, since 'Romanisation' implies the imposition of one culture from the centre of the empire onto its peripheries. The archaeological evidence suggests the real situation was more complex, with peoples colonised by the Roman Empire exercising their own agency to create new, composite religious traditions in response to Roman religion. Elsewhere I have discussed the extent to which some of the cults of Roman Britain – such as the cults of Brigantia or Faunus – might have been neither truly 'Roman' nor truly 'Celtic', but new cults created in Britain as the need for them arose.[45] The binary interpretation usually applied in the study of Romano-British religion – that every cult was either an import from the Roman world or a survival from Iron Age British religious practice – is inadequate, because it ignores the possibility that people in Roman Britain were capable of religious creativity.

The same critique of the shortcomings of 'Romanisation' can also be applied to the idea of 'Christianisation' at a later period. Christianisation is a problematic concept because it implies a one-way transfer of religious influence, emanating from the centres of Christian authority and power, which gradually turned 'pagans' into good Christians. However, Christianisation took many forms, from the haphazard adoption of 'Christianesque' beliefs

[44] Haeussler and Webster, 'Creolage', pp. 1–22; Webster, 'A Dirty Window on the Iron Age?', pp. 121–54.

[45] Young, *Twilight of the Godlings*, pp. 89–135.

and practices by unchristianised peoples to the forcible imposition of Christianity by political power – and everything in between, including sincere, heartfelt conversion resulting from non-violent missionary activity. What is clear, however, is that contact with Christianity did not extinguish pre-Christian beliefs. Instead, it often re-formed them into new creole belief systems and cults that reflected neither a pristine pre-Christian cult nor proper assimilation into the Christian world. Furthermore, like the creole religions of the Caribbean, the creole religions of Europe were a response to crisis. That crisis, for European peoples, was not total separation from their ancestral homelands and traditions; rather, it was the destruction of their religious traditions by missionaries who did not then provide the pastoral and educational infrastructure for Christianity to become culturally embedded. People were left in a religious no-man's land, simultaneously de-paganised and unchristianised, and responded by creating creole religions as best they could.

The notion that creole religions existed in early modern Europe represents a challenge to the two broad historiographical paradigms that have been applied to Christianisation: a 'paganising' paradigm derived from nineteenth-century nationalism, which prefers to see pre-Christian religion as largely pristine and presents Christianity as a culturally destructive force; and a 'Christianising' paradigm in which Christianity was wholly triumphant and forged new identities for Christianised peoples within Christendom. These historiographical tendencies might be considered the 'maximalising' view of pre-Christian religion – that it survived to a late date – and the 'minimalising' view that

pre-Christian religion was extinguished early and later reports of 'paganism' were simply invented, imagined, or misinterpreted by commentators (a view taken, for example, by the German historian Michael Brauer[46]). Hutton has astutely observed that the excessive reification of 'paganism' in societies that had already experienced a conversion event results in 'endless, and irreconcilable, arguments over the extent of the survival of the essence of a religion when the people who professed it have been formally converted to another'.[47] Put another way, the historian searching for 'pagans' in late medieval and early modern Europe risks becoming entangled in a fruitless 'no true Scotsman' line of reasoning, endlessly defending the idea that this or that group of people 'were pagans at heart', in spite of evidence for their extensive contact with Christianity.

But there is another reason to avoid essentialism in the discussion of 'paganism' and Christianity in the societies of northern and eastern Europe – the epistemological 'elephant in the room'. This epistemological elephant is the difficulty of saying anything about how Christianity and pre-Christian religion interacted when we know virtually nothing, in many cases, about pre-Christian religion before it came into contact with Christianity. What passes for a description of 'pagan' religion is often, in all likelihood, a description of creolised practice. A pivot to understanding the religions of unchristianised peoples as creole belief systems removes the need to engage in arid essentialist debates about who was or was not a pagan or

[46] See Brauer, 'Erfindung oder Entdeckung?', pp. 185–216.
[47] Hutton, *Pagan Britain*, p. viii.

what exactly constituted 'true' paganism. It reveals the slow progress of Christianisation in some regions of eastern and northern Europe as neither the plucky survival of paganism against all the odds, nor the overwhelming success of Christianity, but rather the creative response of people who chose their own ways to worship the divine in response to a spiritual and pastoral crisis.

Conversion, Christianisation, and Unchristianised Peoples

In the 1970s the Norwegian missiologist and Lutheran bishop Fridtjov Birkeli distinguished between a 'conversion event' and the process of Christianisation that follows it,[48] introducing a more refined understanding of Christianisation than earlier models which conflated conversion and Christianisation. Simply put, a 'conversion event' is a society's outward adoption of Christianity, either through mass self-identification with Christianity or through a ruler's decision to adopt the Christian faith. Conversion events are themselves historically complex, usually coming at the end of a long road that begins with a culture's first contact with Christianity, and they are not always clearly defined – especially if a culture is highly decentralised. This is why it is very difficult to determine a date for such a conversion event for the Sámi, a collection of peoples with no overarching political organisation spread over a vast area of northern Fennoscandia from the Atlantic coast of Norway to the Kola Peninsula.

[48] For a summary of Birkeli's analysis see Hoggett, *The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion*, p. 15.

Determining the date of a conversion event by a leader's decision to adopt Christianity entails large assumptions about the political structure of a region and it is not altogether clear how colonised nations with no political autonomy fit into such a definition. The 'conversion' of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which marks the *terminus post quem* of this book, is one such event. On the one hand, it can be precisely dated to February 1387; but on the other, it is unlikely to have involved more than a few hundred people in the city of Vilnius.

Whether or not 'conversion events' can be defined satisfactorily, it is nevertheless clear that no society becomes thoroughly Christian in a single event. *Christianisation* is the long process of cultural assimilation of Christianity into all aspects of life that follows the conversion event, including catechisation of the population so that they *understand* Christianity as well as simply deciding to identify with it. Some Christianisations were fairly rapid. Ireland could serve as an example of a country where Christianisation was successful, from 'first contact' with Christianity in the early fifth century (at the latest) to an end to pre-Christian cult by high-status individuals in the mid-sixth century. By 600 CE Ireland had been 'converted on the level of hierarchy and institution', and by 700 CE even 'increasingly marginalized manifestations of non-Christian religion' were gone.[49] In Anglo-Saxon England, likewise, conversion at the elite level was complete by around 680, having begun in 597. Neither early medieval Ireland nor Anglo-Saxon England were anything like a modern unitary state, but regardless of

[49] Williams, *Ireland's Immortals*, p. 4.

political fragmentation there were strong ties of kinship between different political units as well as an implicit or explicit hierarchy of rulers and sub-rulers which ensured that Christianity snowballed once the most influential rulers endorsed it. A further factor behind the rapid Christianisation of England may have been the prestige of the religion of late imperial Rome, which cast its seductive glamour over early medieval England – a heady cocktail of Christianity, Roman cultural prestige, and the promise of mimicking imperial power.[50]

Christianisation in some other nations was notably slower and beset with reverses – such as Hungary, Scandinavia, and the lands of the West Slavs. But, in the Baltic region, Christianisation ground to a halt altogether. The specific reasons for this will be examined in more detail in Chapter 1, but Sylvain Gouguenheim has singled out four factors that account for the failure of Christianisation in the Baltic: negligent missionaries, poor church infrastructure, geographical distance and remoteness, and the language barrier.[51] While these four factors were undoubtedly significant, Gouguenheim's analysis omits a fifth factor: active resistance and rejection of Christianity by the local population. For peoples undergoing Christianisation were not merely passive recipients of a faith, with their acceptance or rejection of the faith dependent on the skill and diligence of missionaries. Pre-Christian peoples had agency. In his study of Samogitia (site of Europe's last conversion event), Mangirdas Bumblauskas breaks conversion and Christianisation

[50] Hawkes, 'Anglo-Saxon Romanitas', pp. 19–36.
[51] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, pp. 173–8.

down into four stages: mission Christianisation (activities preceding a conversion event), official conversion, broad conversion (some level of outward identification with Christianity), and inner Christianisation. The latter did not occur in Samogitia, in Bumblauskas's view, until the late eighteenth century.[52]

The fact that Christianisation could not only fail, but might also be actively rejected, seldom receives the attention it deserves in histories of the conversion and Christianisation of Europe. Furthermore, we should also consider the possibility that the fairly swift outward adoption of Christianity could be the best way for a people to preserve their religious traditions and redirect the attention of missionaries. Often, the very idea of writing a history of conversion and Christianisation implicitly privileges Christianity over whatever it replaces, by placing the emphasis on the growth of Christianity rather than on the response of followers of pre-Christian religions, which may be seen as a heterogeneous mishmash of traditional religions and beliefs with insufficient unity or cultural power to resist the new faith. This was a particular problem in the traditional historiography of the Baltic Crusades, for example, where the religion of the crusaders' enemies received little attention (in spite of its self-evident resilience, which was the reason for the crusades in the first place). This is in part due to the nature of the sources, all of which were written by Christians. But it also reflects, consciously or unconsciously, a teleological historiography of Christianity as the 'inevitable' religion of northern Europe – or, in somewhat

[52] Bumblauskas, 'Samogitia's Christianisation', p. 26.

more secular terms, a teleological historiography of the inevitable adoption of Christianity as a higher stage of religious development, to be succeeded in due course by secularisation.

In the period considered by this book, there existed both baptised and unbaptised unchristianised peoples in Europe. What unchristianised peoples had in common was that they did not integrate Christianity in any significant way into their culture, continuing pre-Christian practices not only concerned with life events such as birth, marriage, death, and burial but also practices of a decidedly 'religious' character, such as sacrifices and the veneration of images of deities. As David Petts has argued, there is no prima facie reason to view the continuance of pre-Christian rites of betrothal, marriage, burial, or commemoration of the dead in post-conversion societies as continuations of pre-Christian religion, as the church often did not take an interest in imposing its own norms and rituals on these customs until many years after a conversion event.[53] What, then, was the *content* of pre-Christian religion that marked a people as unchristianised? Bumblauskas singles out three key factors that mark the *end* of a pagan society: the end of sacrifices to gods, the baptism of all adults, and the establishment of a meaningful parish system.[54] Building on these observations, I suggest five factors that, either singly or together, might lead us to suspect we are dealing with unchristianised people rather than just ignorant or deviant Christians:

[53] Petts, *Pagan and Christian*, pp. 37–40.
[54] Bumblauskas, 'Samogitia's Christianisation', p. 26.

1. Active rejection of the church or the Christian faith.
2. The presence of significant numbers of unbaptised adults in the community.
3. Sacrifices and libations to specific, named pre-Christian deities.
4. Worship of images of specific, named pre-Christian deities.
5. Veneration of natural features such as trees, rocks, and bodies of water in a manner unconnected with Christian piety.

Even here, however, we must tread carefully. While open rejection of the Christian faith is the clearest way in which unchristianised people could show agency, such rejections are not often recorded and they may sometimes have been exaggerated – such as when disobedience to authority and rejection of a new pastor or new devotional practices were presented as the outright rejection of Christianity, for example. Sacrifices and libations, as we have seen, might be offered to Christian saints as well as to pre-Christian deities – and it is not always clear whether we should interpret such acts as 'pagan'. Furthermore, the offering of libations can shade into folk custom – few scholars would seriously suggest, for example, that people leaving milk and cream out for the fairies in rural Ireland constitutes an act of pagan sacrifice. And it can be hard to establish with certainty whether an alleged pre-Christian deity really *was* a pre-Christian deity. Acts of piety undertaken at natural landscape features might be interpreted as 'pagan' just because they deviated from official Christian practice and not because they actually perpetuated pre-Christian cults. Nevertheless, it remains

the case that the presence of one or more of these features should lead us to suspect the presence of pre-Christian religious traditions unincorporated into an essentially Christian worldview.

Histories of 'Pagan' Europe

A great deal has been written about Europe's last pre-Christian religions, but most of it has not been written by historians of religion, has generally been highly focussed on one specific nation or region, and has often not been written in English. For today's Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Sámi, Maris, and others, the unchristianised peoples of the early modern era are ancestors – and not only ancestors, but often mythologised heroes and bearers of national identity. However, the story of Europe's last pre-Christian peoples – and, indeed, their very existence – is one that is often poorly known outside Fennoscandia and eastern Europe. To date, only one book in English has attempted to deal generally with the theme of the persistence of pre-Christian religion in Europe into the early modern era.[55]

The historical theme of the 'last pagans' has attracted a degree of scholarly attention, but this is focussed primarily

[55] Jones and Pennick, *A History of Pagan Europe*. Ken Dowden's *European Paganism* also considered late iterations of pre-Christian religion, although its focus is thematic and anthropological rather than chronological or historical. Some books give a complete chronological survey of paganism, but confined to the British Isles: notably Hutton, *Pagan Britain*; and Williams, *Miracles of Our Own Making*, written for a popular audience.

on one context: the last pagans of Rome.[56] There is also a considerable (and ever-growing) literature on the revival of paganism in modern times,[57] but its historiography seldom reaches any earlier than the nineteenth century. My own volume *Paganism Persisting*, co-authored with Robin Douglas, is an attempt to push the history of revivals of paganism much further back – indeed, into antiquity itself.[58] Furthermore, there is some literature on the pagan theme in learned discourse in the Middle Ages.[59] Not every account of the 'last pagans' has confined itself to Europe, with some scholars taking in the Near East on the grounds that late Graeco-Roman paganism was highly influential there,[60] while the pre-Christian religions of the Sámi and other Finno-Ugric-speaking peoples of the far north have sometimes been considered in a 'Circum-Polar' rather than European context – on the basis that the commonalities with Siberian and Inuit religion are more salient.[61]

[56] See, for example, Chuvin, *Chronicle of the Last Pagans*; Cameron, *Last Pagans of Rome*; Testa, *Strange Death of Pagan Rome*; Watts, *The Final Pagan Generation*.

[57] On the modern revival of paganism see, for example, Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*; Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth*; Davis, *Goddess Unmasked*; Harvey and Hardman (eds.), *Paganism Today*; Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*. There is also a rich literature on pagan revivals in northern and eastern Europe; see, for example, the essays in Strmiska (ed.), *Modern Paganism in World Cultures*; Aitamurto and Simpson (eds.), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements*; Rountree (ed.), *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements*.

[58] Douglas and Young, *Paganism Persisting*.

[59] Milis, *The Pagan Middle Ages*; Gibson, *Imagining the Pagan Past*; Marenbon, *Pagans and Philosophers*; Salih, *Imagining the Pagan*; Chatterjee, *Between the Pagan Past and Christian Present*.

[60] Green, *City of the Moon God*; Hämeen-Anttila, *Last Pagans of Iraq*.

[61] See, for example, the chapters in Pentikäinen (ed.), *Shamanism and Northern Ecology*.

Much of the scholarship on Europe's pre-Christian religions is to be found in the fields of church history and archaeology, and specifically studies of the conversion of Europe and the Northern Crusades.[62] While much of this research is excellent, the primary purpose of such studies is to trace the development of Christian mission and Christianity's eventual dominance, and they are not focussed on the pre-Christian peoples themselves and their religion. While not specifically about religion, S. C. Rowell's *Lithuania Ascending* (1994) broke ranks by concentrating on the pagan Lithuanians themselves, albeit in a time period earlier than that covered by this book.[63] Sylvain Gouguenheim's recent French-language book *Les derniers païens* (2022) is noteworthy for being devoted to Baltic pre-Christian religion and taking the history of that religion right up to the eighteenth century.[64] While not focussed exclusively on religion, the work of Rein Taagepera and Neil Kent provides a crucial survey of the Sámi and other Finno-Ugric-speaking 'animists' at the fringes of Europe,[65] while Andreas Klein has recently produced an indispensable guide to seventeenth-century antiquarian interest in the Sámi.[66]

There are now a number of editions of medieval and early modern sources on late manifestations of pre-Christian religion in Europe, including Juan Antonio Álvarez-Pedrosa's edition of sources for Slavic religion

[62] See, for instance, Murray (ed.), *Crusade and Conversion*; Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North*; Petts, *Pagan and Christian*; Baronas and Rowell, *Conversion of Lithuania*.

[63] Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*.

[64] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*.

[65] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*; Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*.

[66] Klein, *Early Modern Knowledge*.

and my own edition of early modern primary sources on Baltic religion.[67] The scholarship of Norbertas Vėlius and, more recently, Vytautas Ališauskas, has made available a comprehensive collection of extracts from primary sources in the original languages (and Lithuanian translation) dealing specifically with alleged survivals of pre-Christian religion to the end of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.[68] The work of the Czech Balticists Marta Eva Bět'áková and Václav Blažek in producing the *Lexicon of Baltic Mythology* (2021) is also a very welcome contribution to this field.[69] However, even when written in English, the research of scholars from Fennoscandia and eastern Europe often does not receive the attention it deserves, largely because the history of pre-Christian religions is deemed a matter of local interest and its importance for the wider religious history of Europe goes unrecognised.

As we have seen, one of the key debates about pre-Christian religion in early modern Europe is whether it existed at all. At the 'maximalist' end of the spectrum on this question, largely superseded in scholarship but still strong in the popular imagination in many countries (including Britain and Ireland) is the idea that *all* folk culture is essentially 'pagan'. The view that medieval Europe was only superficially or cosmetically Christianised is associated above all with Jean Delumeau, who argued in the 1970s that the Protestant Reformers and the Catholic missionaries of the Counter-Reformation effectively had to convert Catholic Europe to Christianity properly for the first time.[70] In the Baltic region, folklorists such

[67] *SSP-CR*; *PEMB*. [68] *BRMŠ*, 4 vols.; *BRMR*. [69] *LBM*.
[70] Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire*.

as Pranė Dundulienė and Jonas Trinkūnas (the latter a key figure in the pagan revivalist Romuva movement) could be associated with this trend.[71] Clearly, to those interested in reviving pagan religions as a living reality (and indeed those interested in boosting a region's tourist industry), the idea that folk culture has somehow 'encoded' pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices is especially seductive, because it makes it possible to fill the (significant) gaps in our direct knowledge of pre-Christian religion by reverse engineering or 're-paganising' a folk culture presumed to be pagan in the first place.

At the 'minimalist' end of the spectrum lie the extreme sceptics, who have questioned whether there is any compelling evidence that followers of pre-Christian religions existed in early modern Europe at all. Endre Bojtár, for instance, argued that we can know virtually nothing about pre-Christian Baltic religion because all we have are literary traditions of commentary on imagined religions, unmoored from reality.[72] In this conclusion Bójtar followed W. C. Jaskiewicz, who thought none of the Baltic religious and mythological information transmitted by sixteenth-century authors could be trusted.[73] In 1986 John van Engen came at this problem from a slightly different direction, arguing that Christianisation was successfully accomplished in the Middle Ages[74] – although it is important to note that Van Engen's article was not focussed on the geographical 'peripheries' of Europe that are the subject of this book. This extreme scepticism is

[71] Dundulienė, *Pagonybė Lietuvoje*; Trinkūnas (ed.), *Of Gods and Holidays*.
[72] Bojtár, *Foreward to the Past*, pp. 278–356.
[73] Jaskiewicz, 'A Study in Lithuanian Mythology', pp. 65–106.
[74] Van Engen, 'The Christian Middle Ages', pp. 519–52.

occasionally reflected in popular writing on the region; one recent writer took the view that

> Almost everything that has ever been written about the ancient religion of the Balts and Slavs is false … Beyond the names of a few deities and a few scant archaeological remains, nothing is clear. So what can we say about these gods with certainty? Only three things: they lived in trees, they spoke through horses, and they savoured the smell of freshly baked bread.[75]

Such flippant scepticism does little to dispel the prejudice that eastern European culture is without real value, and it promotes stereotypes every bit as much as a credulous embrace of the nationalistic excesses of the nineteenth century. The trend in more recent scholarship is towards a median between these two extremes of interpretation. For example, Darius Baronas and S. C. Rowell have argued that late medieval Lithuania was less 'pagan' than it is usually portrayed, but that 'Orthodox' Ruthenia was also more pagan than it appears; and while they are sceptical of the existence of temples in Lithuania, they do not deny the possibility of rural worship of spirits.[76] Similarly, the work of Siv Rasmussen on early Sámi religion has highlighted the extent of popular Catholicism in Sámi culture, which was often demonised as pagan by Lutheran missionaries; but Rasmussen does not draw the conclusion from this that Sámi pre-Christian religion did not actually exist in the early modern era.[77]

[75] Mikanowski, *Goodbye Eastern Europe*, pp. 6–7.
[76] Baronas and Rowell, *Conversion of Lithuania*, pp. 266–76.
[77] See Rasmussen, 'Protracted Sámi Reformation', pp. 165–83; Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', pp. 265–85.

Alexandra Walsham has argued that 'the problem of pagan survival was in large part a semantic one',[78] in the sense that one historian's pagan survival is another's deviant popular Christianity, depending on which argument the historian wants to make. There is some truth to this, and I would add to Walsham's analysis that one *country's* pagan survival is another's deviant popular Christianity; in other words, folk customs are more likely to be interpreted as 'pagan' in a country whose conversion event occurred later. However, the notion of 'depth of Christianisation' is relevant here; while there is no reason why a fairly recently Christianised society cannot develop its own forms of deviant popular Christianity, it is highly unlikely that 'pagan survivals' can exist in a society deeply Christianised over the course of many centuries – and to claim that they can is an extraordinary claim, requiring extraordinary evidence. But the idea that the popular culture of a country whose Christianisation was accomplished only a few generations ago might be closer to its pre-Christians traditions is not prima facie implausible.

Like Baronas, Rowell, Rasmussen, Walsham, and others, I am conscious of the importance of acknowledging the potentially Christian or Christian-inspired character of early modern popular religion, even at its most deviant. Many accusations of 'paganism' arose from anti-Catholic or anti-Orthodox polemic. But the suggestion that pre-Christian religion did not exist anywhere in early modern Europe is no more plausible than the idea that every survival of folk culture encodes forgotten pagan rites. Christianisation is not an instantaneous process and

[78] Walsham, 'Migrations of the Holy', p. 244.

not every author who recorded 'pagan' rites and beliefs did so with an overt religious agenda. None of the societies described by early modern antiquarians and ethnographers were untouched by Christianity; however haltingly and unsuccessfully, Christianisation had already begun, following a conversion event. Nevertheless, that Christianisation was also incomplete, which is why I propose the term 'unchristianised peoples' to refer to groups where pre-Christian religious outlooks and practices remained dominant (or continued alongside Christian practices).

Many of the conceptual difficulties associated with discussing 'paganism' in medieval and early modern Europe have arisen from a misplaced essentialism whereby Christianity and paganism are seen as discrete ideological opposites in a battle of ideas.[79] But rarely did the Christianisation process look like this; missionaries in northern Europe did not, like Paul of Tarsus in the Athenian Areopagus in Acts 17, address themselves to societies with highly intellectualised conceptions of reality. David Kling has argued that paganism, decentralised and non-hierarchical as it was, did not compete with Christianity for the same space in people's lives.[80] Paganism and Christianity were mental worlds apart – which was a problem for Christianity as it sought to portray pre-Christian religion as a false belief it was replacing. But while the church was concerned with matters of identity, eternal salvation, and sacred authority, the cults and rites of the gods marked the ritual, natural, and agricultural years and were focussed on ensuring equilibrium

[79] Petts, *Pagan and Christian*, p. 27.
[80] Kling, *History of Christian Conversion*, p. 104.

between the divine, human, and natural worlds and the continuance of natural cycles. This was the 'asymmetry … in the religious attitude' of Christians and pagans that made both discussion and coherent conflict difficult.[81] The collision of Christianity and pre-Christian religions did not, in most cases, produce a battle of ideas, but resulted either in conversion (in responsive societies) or creolisation (in recidivist ones). It is those recidivist societies that are the focus of this book.

Sources and Hermeneutics

The principal sources for the study of pre-Christian religions in Europe between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries include chronicles, hagiographies of missionaries, ethnographic (or proto-ethnographic) and antiquarian writings, catechisms, ecclesiastical records dealing with discipline such as episcopal visitations, missionary reports, deeds of foundation of churches, judicial proceedings (for example, trials for witchcraft and sorcery), and, at a later date, the work of lexicographers. The authors of all these works were Christians, and antiquarians and ethnographers often worked from second- or third-hand reports on remote regions rather than relying on personal experience. However, it is undeniable that from the mid-fifteenth century onwards it became more common for ethnographic literature to be driven by curiosity as well as pious horror at pagan beliefs and practices. It is in this period, therefore, that we first have the possibility of glimpsing something of the reality of pre-Christian

[81] Clemente, 'Introduction', p. 17.

religions. On the other hand, as these chapters will explore, ethnographic and proto-ethnographic writings relying on hearsay and much older textual traditions were often much less immediate than disciplinary and judicial records. The disciplinary and judicial records, while clearly created with the intent of stigmatising and punishing pre-Christian beliefs and practices, were also written in response to specific infractions, and the level of detailed and geographically specific information they contain can therefore surpass the writings of the ethnographers.

All of these sources must be used with caution; they hold up a mirror to the anxieties of the Christian societies that produced them and the question of whether a reality of pre-Christian belief can also be glimpsed 'through a glass darkly' in that mirror is a fraught one. Furthermore, early modern writings tell us more about some aspects of pre-Christian religion than others; they are rich sources for reports of ritual practices, because these were the most visible manifestations of religion and were often reported by eyewitnesses, but it is much rarer for them to attempt to describe the mythologies or belief systems underlying ritual practice, or to give a detailed account of the material culture of pre-Christian religion.

In addition to establishing the limitations of the sources we have, it is also important to establish which alleged sources of evidence for pre-Christian religions are not, in fact, acceptable historical sources. In the nineteenth century, amateur and professional collectors began gathering, editing, and publishing tales, songs, dances, and customs from rural people all over Europe, resulting in a vast expansion in the body of apparent evidence for popular beliefs reaching far back into the past, owing to the

early folklorists' prevailing assumption that folk culture preserved immemorial – and probably pre-Christian – customs. As Margaret Murray confidently declared in 1921, in medieval western Europe 'the mass of the people continued to follow their ancient customs and beliefs with a veneer of Christian rites'.[82] Similarly, the historian Geoffrey Coult insisted medieval women were crypto-pagans: 'in church, the women crowded around Mary, yet they paid homage to the old deities by their nightly fireside, or at the time-honoured sacred haunts, grove or stone or spring'.[83] However, the idea that folklore collected in the nineteenth century (and later) constitutes a body of historical evidence for ancient belief systems has been largely discredited.[84]

This is not to say that folklore is not important to the study of a culture, and Carlo Ginzburg warned that the rejection of 'Murrayite' excesses, such as Margaret Murray's imagined Neolithic 'witch cult' surviving into early modern Europe, might produce a reaction that went too far towards scepticism. In some places in early modern Europe, agrarian fertility cults really did exist.[85] And while the existence of animist fertility cults in early modern Scotland or Italy is a claim requiring extraordinary evidence, the persistence of pre-Christian religion into modern times at Europe's northern and eastern margins is less controversial – even if it is rather overlooked

[82] Murray, *Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, p. 19.
[83] Coult, *Five Centuries of Religion*, p. 180.
[84] For an overview of the development of academic views on this subject see Hutton, 'How Pagan Were Medieval English Peasants?', pp. 235–49.
[85] Ginzburg, *The Night Battles*, p. xxiii.

by many scholars. What is more controversial is whether folklore collected in the nineteenth century should be used as an interpretative framework for the scattered references to deities and rituals that appear in chronicles, missionary reports, and other sources before the nineteenth century. The pre-nineteenth-century evidence can easily become pieces of a puzzle to be slotted into a folklorically determined conception of what a particular people's pre-Christian religion was like. At one level, this approach is not entirely unreasonable. Given that we have good reason to believe that unchristianised people still existed in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sápmi as late as the eighteenth century, is it beyond the bounds of possibility that folklore collected in the nineteenth (and even twentieth) centuries has a chance of preserving some kernel of truth regarding the nature of pre-Christian religion? Certainly, it is more reasonable than folklorists in nineteenth-century England trying to reconstruct Neolithic fertility rites from Morris dancing.

However, one difficulty with the use of folklore collected from the nineteenth century onwards as a historical source is that it privileges folkloric material for its quantity and narrative coherence rather than for its closeness in time to the actual practice of pre-Christian religions. The methodology of the early folklorists was undoubtedly better than the haphazard way in which earlier authors recorded fragments of pre-Christian lore, but, crucially, the folklorists were living at a time when the practice of pre-Christian religions was essentially extinct – even if its extinction in a region like the eastern Baltic was much more recent than in Britain, Ireland, or Germany. The problem was the belief that folklore was

full of ancient and immemorial survivals. Contemporary folklore studies, by contrast, emphasise the importance of human creativity and the creation of folklore as a continuous process, in contrast to an older 'diffusionist' view that legends and customs can only be passed from generation to generation indefinitely rather than being invented as the need arises.[86] It is thus the fragmentary evidence *not* systematically collected by folklorists but recorded at a time before successful Christianisation which, whatever its shortcomings, brings us tantalisingly close to the world of pre-Christian religions.

As the Latvian archaeologist Zenta Broka-Lāce has put it, 'the use of [folklore] has always been treated with suspicion [by historians], because particular events and notions have arisen in different periods, so only in rare cases can folklore be directly linked to an actual timescale'.[87] In other words, folklore has an ahistorical tendency to 'flatten' the past (treating all mythological data, from any era, as equal), thus removing most of the meaningful historical data. This 'flattening' of the past is exacerbated by a prevalent assumption that pre-Christian religions were deeply conservative and did not change over time. This is an especially problematic assumption given the profound impact of contact with Christianity on many pre-Christian religions. The role of the nineteenth century in forming our perceptions of 'paganism' will be explored in detail in Chapter 6, but the historian dealing with a period before the nineteenth century cannot afford to rely on speculations

[86] For an overview of contemporary trends in folklore studies see Bendix and Hasan-Rokem, 'Introduction', pp. 9–12.

[87] Broka-Lāce, 'Is It Possible to Reconstruct a Prehistoric Religion?', 149.

founded on nineteenth-century folklore-collecting, however diligent. Nineteenth-century folklore tells us a great deal about the nineteenth century, and perhaps even the eighteenth; whether it has anything reliable to tell us about earlier eras is something on which the historian must suspend judgement.

Just as folklore is not a historical source, comparative mythology grounded in historical linguistics and Indo-European studies cannot be treated as a historical source either. The example of Dievas/Dievs, the 'supreme god of the Baltic pantheon', illustrates some of the difficulties. *Dievas/Dievs* is, of course, the Lithuanian/Latvian word for 'God', referring in modern Baltic languages to the Christian God. While the ancient Balts may well once have worshipped a sky god named **Deivas*, on the basis that this theonym is cognate with numerous other Indo-European words (like Latin *deus*), there is no actual documentary evidence for a Baltic god Dievas/Dievs – an absence explained away by some earlier mythologists on the basis that Dievas/Dievs was identified early on with the Christian God. We thus have a historical claim being made (that Christian missionaries took a pagan sky god, Dievas/Dievs, and identified him as the Christian God) on the basis of the *absence* of textual evidence.[88] This is not an acceptable methodology for the historian. We cannot make large assumptions about pre-Christian religion purely on the basis of linguistic and comparative mythological suppositions, which risk

[88] *LBM*, pp. 57–60. The closest we come to historical evidence of the existence of Dievs is a 1604 report by Cardinal Valenti on Latvian belief, which listed a supreme deity named Tebo Deves, and a nameless Latvian 'god of the sky' listed by Paul Einhorn in 1636.

creating mirages with no real attested existence like the alleged Baltic sky god. What we *can* say with certainty, on the basis of Baltic folklore and folk song, is that modern Balts formed their own folk conception of the Christian God (Dievas/Dievs), which may or may not have been influenced by the persistence of elements of pre-Christian belief, poor catechesis in the Christian faith, or both.[89]

Unfortunately, the temptation to privilege folklore as a historical source for pre-Christian religions was for too long indulged by a historiography that threw the net too wide in the search for 'pagan survivals'. If any expression of popular religion that deviates from officially sanctioned Christianity is deemed 'pagan', if folk medicine is deemed 'pagan', if seasonal folk customs are deemed 'pagan in origin', if any folktale can be reinterpreted as a degenerated pagan religious myth – then 'paganism' is everywhere, to the point that distinguishing a people's pre-Christian from their Christianised culture is scarcely meaningful at all. The hermeneutic of 'pagan survivalism' in ethnography and folkloristics, which was dominant for over a century between the mid-nineteenth and mid- to late twentieth century, was underpinned by a prevailing assumption that folklore was very old. If the memory of the folk retained data from the distant past, that data was in all likelihood 'pagan' – and the more recent the Christianisation of a particular people, the more likely it was that folklore testified to a 'pagan' substratum of ritual and belief. I have referred to this tendency elsewhere as 'pagans under the bed':[90] the belief that pagans and

[89] *LBM*, pp. 60–6. [90] Young, *Twilight of the Godlings*, p. 164.

paganism are to be found everywhere in European culture, if only we look closely enough.

One of the effects of this 'pagans under the bed' mentality is that historians can come to regard any unusual, non-standard, or unorthodox cultural practice connected with the calendar, with major life events, or involving some element of ritual, as 'pagan': a relic of some presumed pre-Christian rite that had survived into Christian times. A familiar example is the Rusalii in Slavic nations: the practice of young men and women bathing and playing games together in bodies of water on St John's Night (23 June), which is often uncritically received as a 'fertility rite'. However, some older commentators interpreted the Rusalii as a commemoration of baptism,[91] and the possibility that the Rusalii began as a form of popular Christian devotion and gradually transformed into a celebration of youthful sexuality is rarely considered. This is not to say that the Rusalii is *not* of pre-Christian origin – it might be, but there exists an alternative explanation for it in popular Christianity, and therefore it is important not to make uncritical assumptions about what is and is not 'pagan'.

Roman Zaroff has noted that 'the interpretation of extinct religious beliefs from ethnographic material mainly comprises an expression of its lower strata' because missionaries quite quickly eliminated the higher deities and public cults – a point also made by Heiki Valk.[92] But the interpretation of these 'lower strata' of belief as pagan

[91] Álvarez-Pedrosa and Marinas, *Rituals in Slavic Pre-Christian Religion*, p. 22.

[92] Zaroff, 'Some Aspects of Pre-Christian Baltic Religion', pp. 187–8; Valk, 'Christianisation in Estonia', p. 574.

or otherwise is largely dependent on historical context. Belief in lesser deities was not much different, in both content and practice, from belief in fairies and similar beings in Europe's most deeply Christianised societies. Importantly, however, such things were made sense of in Christianised societies via the framework of a popular Christian theology – and this was not the case in unchristianised regions. The historical and cultural contexts, in other words, were different. Popular religion in thoroughly Christianised regions was popular Christianity, whereas in unchristianised or recently Christianised territories it was often a 'Christianesque' manifestation of pre-Christian religious traditions.

The line between the 'Christianesque' and the 'paganesque' in popular religion is sometimes difficult – if not impossible – to draw. But learned commentators on popular religion sometimes interpreted it as neither popular Christianity nor remnants of pre-Christian religion, but as forbidden magical practices or witchcraft. This 'hermeneutic of magic' had advantages and disadvantages for those seeking to eradicate deviant religiosity; on the one hand, sorcery was a malevolent and malicious act and often carried judicial punishments that idolatry did not (since the latter could be excused by ignorance). On the other hand, if pre-Christian religion was reclassified from idolatry to witchcraft that also implied that the conversion process was complete and unchristianised peoples were henceforth to be treated as Christians, which placed the burden of enforcing good Christian behaviour on church authorities. In early modern Iceland, for example, *galdur* was a form of magic almost entirely of pre-Christian origin, based on the power of runes; similarly, the shamanistic

idea that a magician could send out his *hugr* ('mind') persisted in early modern Iceland.[93] Yet few would dispute that early modern Iceland was a Christian society – indeed, its Christianisation was by that time over five centuries old. However, when Matthäus Prätorius commented on sorcery in Prussia he treated it as pagan, since early modern rural Prussia was not yet a stably Christianised society.

Understanding the frameworks of interpretation through which early modern authors and missionaries approached unchristianised European peoples is crucial to the project of trying to recover any reliable data about what these peoples actually believed and practised. The clash of worldviews between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in the New World from the end of the fifteenth century onwards is well known and much studied. A key theme of such encounters was the attempt by Europeans to find frames of reference for peoples and places unlike any they had ever met before, to the point of drawing on mythology – from mythical islands and voyages in the western ocean to tales of Amazon warriors and giants.[94] The unchristianised peoples of the Old World, who usually had a long history of contact with Christianity even if they were reluctant to embrace it wholeheartedly, were rarely as difficult for learned commentators to process as the peoples of the New World. But, in common with the New World, peoples at the fringe of Europe lay at or beyond the edge of the scope of one of the chief sources of information early modern scholars had to draw on: the ethnography of the ancient world.

[93] Hastrup, 'Iceland', pp. 387–91.
[94] On this theme see Magasich-Airola and Beer, *America Magica*.

Early modern authors pored over ancient ethnographers such as Herodotus in an attempt to identify peoples of their own time (and indeed themselves) with the tribes enumerated by the ancients. Thus it was that Poles concluded they were in fact Sarmatians, while Swedes styled themselves as Goths and the Russians were identified with the Scythians. Identifications like these rendered peoples beyond the limits of the former Roman Empire seemingly more familiar than they really were, given that most early modern ethnographers had only a vague idea of the vast movements of peoples and languages in the migration era of late antiquity. Just as the peoples of the ancient world provided a reference point for living peoples, so the religions of the ancient world, as described by the ancients, provided the reference point for understanding pre-Christian religions.

While we might like to think we have broken free, conceptually, from the straitjacket of *interpretatio Romana* (the Roman practice of interpreting all religions after the pattern of Graeco-Roman religion), this is hardly the case. Just as the patterns of Latin grammar continue to influence heavily the teaching and learning of grammar in many languages, so a Graeco-Roman 'grammar' of religious studies remains dominant. For instance, the expectation that pre-Christian religions should have a 'pantheon' (implying a hierarchy of anthropomorphic polytheistic deities with defined functions) remains widespread, as does a prevailing assumption that celestial deities are more significant than chthonic deities or nature spirits. In any religion we encounter, we might look for ritual specialists or priests and assume there exists a distinction between acceptable and unacceptable religion

or 'superstition' (another Roman term). We might even assume that most religions have deities cognate with deities in other cultures, or at least deities who fill the same religious 'niche' across different cultures. When figurines are discovered by archaeologists, they might be interpreted as 'idols', while animal remains in an apparently religious context might be interpreted as 'shamanism'.

If we approach pre-Christian religions with a preconceived template for how every 'pagan' religion should look, it is not surprising that we will find the evidence we need (even if it is from much later folklore or cross-cultural comparisons) and that every religion turns out to fit the expected pattern. But this says more about our approach to pre-Christian religions than it says about those religions themselves. I have argued elsewhere that comparative mythology has continued where *interpretatio Romana* left off, eagerly seeking 'cognate' deities across cultures, especially when bolstered by Indo-European etymologies.[95] Part of the problem, when it comes to religions that apparently survived into the early modern period, is the very fact that we have written sources purporting to describe pre-Christian religious beliefs and practices – because the survival of such evidence gives the illusion that we know more about these religions than we really do.

Like *interpretatio Romana*, *interpretatio Christiana* (a hermeneutic based on traditional Christian understandings of 'paganism') has had a deep impact on perceptions of pre-Christian religion in Europe. *Interpretatio Christiana* takes in both the Bible and the writings of the Church Fathers, who typically portrayed

[95] *PEMB*, pp. 24–7.

pagans as the *gentes* ('nations') unenlightened by knowledge of God, who therefore remained in a state of blindness and sin. The pagans of the Old Testament and patristic literature are naïve and foolish, mistaking statues made by their own hands or animals for gods worthy of worship and vulnerable to deception by demons who set themselves up as deities. St Augustine's mockery of the deities assigned to govern different parts of a door in *The City of God* is typical of a Christian view of pagans as credulous to a ludicrous degree.[96] However, *interpretatio Christiana* was not confined to the idea that unchristianised peoples were all dominated by demonic deception. Christopher Columbus famously argued, in a letter to Ferdinand and Isabella, that the Taíno people of the islands of the Caribbean had 'no religion nor idolatry'[97] – an idea which had previously been advanced for the Guanches of the Canary Islands (see Chapter 2). While ostensibly more sympathetic towards unchristianised peoples, this alternative *tabula rasa* hermeneutic allowed unchristianised peoples' religious and spiritual traditions to be dismissed as something less than religion, and it lent additional legitimacy to the imposition of Christianity.

Related to the *tabula rasa* hermeneutic was the hermeneutic of witchcraft, in which pre-Christian religions were interpreted not as religions at all, but as a collection of superstitions or mere sorcery. In modern times, too, some historians have struggled to see the difference between religion and magic when it comes

[96] On *interpretatio Christiana* see *PEMB*, pp. 24–5.
[97] Markham (ed.), *Journal of Christopher Columbus*, p. 90.

to unchristianised peoples. This is, of course, a genuine interpretative problem; it is notoriously difficult to draw the boundaries between religion and magic, to the point that no satisfactory definition of either religion or magic exists that succeeds in excluding the one from the sphere of the other. But it is one thing to acknowledge that the categories of 'religion' and 'magic' were inseparably interconnected in pre-Christian religion and another to risk denigrating pre-Christian ritual practices by 'downgrading' them to the status of magical operations or assuming that any cult that fails to distinguish religious and magical practices is a 'low' form of religious development. We should be cautious, therefore, in denying the status of 'religion' to ritual practices just because they seem particularly obscure. The legacy of the Enlightenment is as much to blame as that of the Crusades and the Reformation for denigrating pre-Christian religions in ways historians may not even be aware of. Thus, for example, Rein Taagepera's remark that animist Finno-Ugric peoples such as the Mari were 'lagging in religious development' compared to Russian colonists is revealing of the assumption that Christianity is somehow inherently more sophisticated and civilisation-bearing than pre-Christian religions.[98]

Archaeologists are generally a great deal more circumspect than historians in drawing interpretative conclusions about religion in the past because they are dealing with very limited evidence for the long-vanished belief systems of long-vanished cultures. Archaeologists are more likely to rely on the insights of anthropology for

[98] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 56.

comparative data, rather than on historical sources from the ancient world. On the other hand, archaeologists are sometimes *so* reluctant to talk about religion (preferring the more oblique 'ritual') that they are barely willing to ask the questions that need to be asked, let alone answer them.[99] It is important to bear in mind that pre-Christian religions may have been around since the Upper Palaeolithic – up to 50,000 years ago – and therefore we ought to expect that vast variety has existed in them and that they have continuously undergone development over millennia. It is thus woefully inadequate to stereotype them as 'totemism', 'animism', or 'shamanism'.[100] It is still more inadequate to attempt to interpret 50,000 years of human religiosity by analogy with the religion of the ancient Romans. At the same time, however, we should not assume that pre-Christian religions were unsophisticated or lacked concepts that matter to us. Jacob Mackey has recently argued, using cognitive theory, that belief was central to ancient Roman religion – in contrast to the traditional view that it was a series of ritual practices, bereft of the concept of belief.[101] The same may have been true of other pre-Christian religions too.

A premise on which this book rests is that we should resist the urge to 'reconstruct' pre-Christian religions on which we have only fragmentary data, accepting instead that we have only partial glimpses of these phenomena. Efforts to reconstruct coherent cosmologies for long-extinct religions that are only partially attested have

[99] Broka-Lāce, 'Is It Possible to Reconstruct a Prehistoric Religion?', p. 150.
[100] Insoll, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion*, p. 30.
[101] Mackey, *Belief and Cult*.

a tendency to import the assumptions of the reconstructor, as well as drawing on ever more tendentious evidence as the reconstructor struggles to fill gaps. The urge to reconstruct pre-Christian religions emerges, in turn, from the urge to reify such religions as discreet modes of belief opposed to Christianity. By placing the emphasis of this book on unchristianised *peoples* – the absence and failure of Christianisation – I aim to minimise the historiographical pressure to be clear about exactly what pre-Christian beliefs unchristianised people held in the early modern period. The answer is often that we simply do not know or understand and perhaps we never will. But while fragmentary evidence makes it very difficult to reconstruct belief systems, it can give us an idea of whether people were Christianised or not.

Structure and Scope

The structure this book follows is broadly chronological and ordered by century, considering the evidence for pre-Christian religion in Europe in the fifteenth (Chapter 2), sixteenth (Chapter 3), seventeenth (Chapter 4), eighteenth (Chapter 5), and nineteenth centuries (Chapter 6). Chapter 1 stands outside of this chronological framework and sets the scene historically, geographically, and ethnographically for the subsequent chapters. The book's geographical scope is the Continent of Europe as it is conventionally defined by geographers, with its eastern and south-eastern limits defined by the Ural and Caucasus Mountains. As we shall see, at the northernmost and easternmost edge of Europe this geography is somewhat arbitrary when

it comes to religion, with peoples like the Khanty and Mansi living on both sides of the Urals and the 'shamanistic' religions of the Arctic Circle arguably bearing more relation to other Arctic religions outside Europe than to European religious traditions further south. However, I have chosen to adhere to these geographical limitations because it was European states such as Sweden, Denmark–Norway, and Russia which engaged with these unchristianised peoples, even if Russia's religious history also takes in peoples beyond the Urals.

Each chapter (apart from Chapter 6 on the nineteenth century, which adopts a rather different approach) deals in turn with the unchristianised peoples still existing in Europe during the era it covers. As those peoples became Christianised or ethnically assimilated they disappear from view – such as the Guanches, Christianised in the fifteenth century, and the Old Prussians, who ceased to exist (or be visible) as a people at the end of the seventeenth century. The chapters also treat the main trends of interpretation current at that time, and thus Chapter 3 on the sixteenth century examines the development of humanist ethnography, Chapter 4 (on the seventeenth century) looks at the significance of antiquarianism, and Chapter 5 (on the eighteenth century) considers the impact of the Enlightenment. Chapter 6 is as much about the reinterpretation of Europe's 'pagan' past as it is about any lingering traces of pre-Christian Europe. Finally, the subject of the book's Epilogue is the potential significance of the pre-Christian past to Europe's religious future.

1

Europe's Unchristianised Edge

Who Were the 'Pagans'?

In 1252 King Haakon IV Haakonsson of Norway ordered the construction of the northernmost church in the world. It was to be built on the island of Tromsøya, in the fjord of Malangen, which had been since the ninth century the most northerly Norse settlement in Scandinavia. In 1308 Pope Clement V named this small wooden church 'St Mary of *Trums* next to the pagans (*juxta paganos*)', a reminder that the embryonic settlement of Tromsø represented a frontier of Christianity rather than a frontier of the human race.[1] For there were already people living in what is today northern Norway, and they had been there for many centuries: the Sámi people, living a semi-nomadic lifestyle and speaking a Finno-Ugric language. While the Norse lived on the defensible island of Tromsøya, the Sámi occupied the mainland and the larger neighbouring island of Kvaløya. However, the King of Norway was not in reality protecting Tromsø against the 'pagan' Sámi, but rather against the Orthodox Christian Republic of Novgorod to the east, which had similarly begun expanding into northern Fennoscandia. Tromsø was a frontier of Christianity, but it was also a frontier between Latin and Byzantine Christianity.

[1] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', pp. 269–70.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.005

Tromsø was just one of several places in medieval Europe that were frontiers of the northern Christian world. And, whereas in southern Europe that frontier was usually with Islam, in northern and north-eastern Europe Christians existed *juxta paganos*. However, the reason why Tromsø was Christian and its hinterland remained unchristianised was not simply because the church's missionary resources were at their limit this far north. Rather, the further Christians ventured north and east in Europe, the more they encountered peoples who had little interest in being Christianised, and whose ways of life, languages, and cultures bore little relation to anything missionaries had encountered before. The Christianity of the first millennium, with its roots in the urban world of the ancient Mediterranean, did not immediately appeal to nomads, hunter-gatherers, and unsettled agriculturalists with little concept of urban life or religious hierarchies. Thus it was that whole peoples remained unchristianised – and stigmatised as 'pagans' – as Christianity ran up against the limits of its missionary resources (at least for now) in northern and eastern Europe. But who were these unchristianised peoples? Where did they live, and why did they remain beyond the limits of Christianisation in medieval Europe?

The Estonian historian Rein Taagepera wrote of an 'animist strip of Baltic and Finnic peoples' between the Catholic and Orthodox Christian worlds in medieval east-central Europe,[2] referring to the late conversion of the Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Sámi, Karelians, Nenets, Maris, and other peoples, in contrast to the

[2] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 48.

adoption of Christianity by Germanic and Slavic peoples. While the conversion of the rest of Europe's peoples was gradual yet relentless, the progress of Christianity stalled for many centuries in this 'animist strip', or took a very long time to reach it. It might be more accurate, however, to speak of two strips: a western strip running from northern Fennoscandia to the eastern Baltic, and an eastern strip closer to the Urals. In addition to the sheer geographical remoteness of these peoples, as well as their small numbers, their scattered settlement, and their non-settled (or largely non-urban) lifestyle, Taagepera also suggested that language was a barrier. While the Germanic and Scandinavian languages, as well as the Slavic languages, were on a linguistic continuum of mutual intelligibility that made rapid evangelisation possible, in the case of the Baltic and Finnic peoples no already Christianised nation existed which belonged to their language group. As a consequence, when conversion came it occurred as part of acts of colonisation by Christianised peoples.[3] Furthermore, animism itself presented a barrier to missionary activity, since missionaries encountered beliefs and practices so different from the paganism described in the Bible or in Classical texts that they were not sure how to respond to them.

While the Baltic Lithuanians, Latvians, and Prussians were clearly kindred peoples, both linguistically and ethnically, several of the other peoples considered in this book – likewise late adopters and resisters of Christianity – are related linguistically but are separated by vast geographical distances and cultural differences. The Estonians,

[3] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 49.

Sámi, Maris, Karelians, Komis, Udmurts, Mordvins, and Nenets people are all speakers of Finno-Ugric languages, spread between the Baltic Sea and the Volga, and as far north as the Sub-Arctic tundra. These languages are not closely related; in many cases they diverged thousands of years ago and have formed sub-groups that contain much diversity of their own – there are at least ten Sámi languages, for example.[4] These peoples also differed vastly in their ways of life, from the hunter-gatherer lifestyle of the Sub-Arctic Nenets people to the traditional reindeer-herding of the Sámi and the settled farming lifestyle of the Estonians. Furthermore, there is more than one way of geographically categorising these peoples – as Circum-Polar, Circum-Baltic, or Eurasian peoples, depending which cultural, linguistic, and geographical relationships we prefer to emphasise. It is impossible to reconstruct a proto-religion of all the Finno-Ugric peoples, even if we suppose that such a religion ever existed.[5] However, it is not so much their related languages and religious traditions that united these peoples, but their shared experience of the effects of Russian expansionism and their late adoption of Christianity.

The purpose of this chapter is to trace the history of the Christianisation of northern and eastern Europe up to 1387, when the last major political threat to Christianisation was removed by the conversion of Lithuania – with a particular focus on the setbacks faced in Christianity's expansion, and the reasons for them.

[4] On the Finno-Ugric languages see Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 30–5.

[5] Honko and Pentikäinen, 'Finno-Ugric Religions', p. 3106.

The chapter considers a contemporary portrayal of the religious state of northern and eastern Europe in around 1240 (by Bartholomaeus Anglicus), before introducing Europe's unchristianised peoples as they may have been in the thirteenth century – beginning with the Sámi in the far north and moving south to consider the Finns, Karelians, Votians, Izhorians, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Prussians. We then move further east to meet the Komis, Mordvins, Chuvashes, Maris, and Udmurts of the Volga-Ural region. These peoples, with a few exceptions, were not only late to Christianisation; they also came to be ethnically stereotyped as 'pagans', which arguably slowed their assimilation into the Christian world.

Christianisation Falters

The building of St Mary of *Trums* as the last frontier between Norse Christianity and Sámi animism was not the first time the Christian world had encountered an apparent barrier to the continued progress of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. The Christianisation of Europe occurred in several phases, the first of which was the conversion of the Roman Empire and, after the disintegration of the Western Empire, the conversion of the Germanic and other peoples who settled in the former empire during the migration period. But the major challenge of this early era, from the Emperor Constantine's Edict of Milan (313) to the conversion of the Visigoths to Catholic Christianity in 589, was the popularity of competing forms of Christianity among the 'barbarian' peoples (such as Arianism), rather than the barbarians' reluctance to convert *tout court*. Christianity became

invested with great cultural prestige in the twilight years of the Western Roman Empire, and the idea that divine providence prepared the Roman Empire to receive the Gospel (*praeparatio evangelica*) and then become its propagator 'sanctified' the *Romanitas* that many barbarian rulers craved in the wreckage of empire. The first stage of Europe's Christianisation went hand in hand with cultural 'Romanisation' like the introduction of Latin as a learned lingua franca, even in territories like Ireland that technically lay beyond the limits of the actual empire.[6]

The second stage of Christianisation concentrated on barbarian peoples living outside the limits of the former empire, beginning with English-led missions to the Frisians and Germans in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. Like the Roman church's mission to the Anglo-Saxons in the previous century, these missions focussed on converting key rulers who would then (it was hoped) disseminate Christianity to their peoples. The Christianisation of the Germans proved successful until it reached the Saxons in 772, who resisted the Frankish leader Charlemagne; this led to what was perhaps Europe's first significant 'war of Christianisation' – or Christianisation by warfare – in which Charlemagne aimed to subdue the Saxons militarily in order to incorporate them into his dominions as well as to secure their submission to baptism.[7] However, while the Saxons largely shared a language and culture with their Frankish conquerors, when

[6] MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, pp. 343–4. On the phases of medieval Europe's conversion see Kling, *History of Christian Conversion*, pp. 103–50.

[7] On Charlemagne's Saxon wars see Rembold, *Conquest and Christianization*, pp. 39–84.

the eastern frontiers of Christianity reached the Slavs this was no longer the case. Furthermore, the militarily aggressive and expansionist Norse peoples initially showed no sign of converting, and their conquest of large parts of Britain, Ireland, Normandy, and the territory around the River Dnieper occurred before their Christianisation.

The very wealth of the Norse dominions, however, encouraged a more settled existence and a great deal of cultural absorption. It was not long before the Norsemen began embracing the religions of the peoples they had conquered, such as Latin Christianity in Normandy, Britain, and Ireland. Norse-ruled Rus' adopted Byzantine Christianity in 988, and slowly but surely the cultural gravity of the Norse world shifted, rendering the conversion of Scandinavia itself all but inevitable. By the year 1000 even remote Iceland had accepted Christianity, albeit with some equivocation,[8] although Norse paganism lingered in the Swedish region of Småland as late as 1123, when King Sigurd the Crusader led a military expedition to suppress an annual sacrifice.[9] But the West Slavs, like the Saxons before them, proved more resistant to the new faith. While the Poles were fairly early Slavic adopters of Christianity (in the 960s), other peoples, such as the Redarians, put up determined resistance to conversion. If Charlemagne's war with the Saxons was the first war of Christianisation, the attempted conversion of the West Slavs was the first example of Christianisation by colonisation, since the lands of the Polabian Slavs were attractive to the now Christian Germans of Saxony. If

[8] Grønlie (trans.), *Íslendingabók*, p. 9.
[9] Nyberg, *Monasticism in North-Western Europe*, pp. 121–5.

Slavic 'pagans' could be dispossessed of their lands, those lands were ripe for the taking by German Christians.

The Polabian Slavs, in their turn, unleashed a new kind of pagan violence against Christian German settlers. In 983 they formed a new tribal confederation known as the Luticians and targeted churches and monasteries as hated symbols of the new faith – and not just for plunder, as the pagan Vikings had once done.[10] The unchristianised Slavs also began to construct large, monumental shrine complexes – perhaps as a response to the threat posed by Christianity, and in competition with it. In around 1005 Thietmar of Merseburg noted that the Luticians had constructed an enormous shrine called Riedegost, the religious focus of the newly reconstituted Lutician nation:

> In the land of the Redarii there is a city called Riedegost, which has three corners and one door in each wall and which is surrounded on all sides by a great forest which is untouched and venerated by the local people. Two of its doors are open for all to enter. The third, which faces east and is the smallest, opens onto a path leading to a nearby lake which has a dreadful appearance. In the city there is no more than one temple skilfully made of wood and supported on a foundation made from the horns of different types of animals. Its outer walls are adorned by admirably carved images of gods and goddesses; inside, there stand gods made by the hand of man, each with their name inscribed, dressed in helmets and armour, with a terrible appearance; the most important of them is called Svarožic and he is honoured and worshipped by all the pagans above all else.[11]

[10] On the Polabian revolt see Lübke, 'Polabian Alternative', pp. 379–89.
[11] *SSP-CR*, p. 72. On this shrine see Lübke, 'Polabian Alternative', pp. 379–80.

Christianisation was not the only possible response to Christianity; another was to strengthen or reinvent pre-Christian religions in opposition to it. The Luticians' new emphasis on monumental sanctuaries, gods portrayed in anthropomorphic statuary, and a professional priesthood may have owed more to competition with Christianity than to their ancient traditions. On this interpretation, just as churches, monasteries, and cathedrals were central to Christianity, so the pagans responded with the construction of impressive sacred sites of their own.[12] This could be interpreted as the process Paul Werth has described as 'internal conversion': when faced with the threat of competition from an alien religion like Christianity or Islam, followers of traditional religions will sometimes reform their religious practices and beliefs from within in order to formalise them and give them something closer to the structure of a 'world religion' – as occurred in the nineteenth century in Mari El and in twentieth-century postcolonial Bali.[13] Whether or not medieval West Slavic 'pagans' were making a new religion for themselves, however, Christian commentators portrayed them as apostates who had once adopted Christianity and now repudiated it. According to Helmold of Bosau, the four-faced god of the Rugians, Svetovit, was really St Vitus,[14] and it was probably for this reason that when the monk Berno established the bishopric of Schwerin in 1170 he compelled the pagans to be baptised on the feast day of St Vitus.[15] Few images of Slavic deities

[12] Lübke, 'Polabian Alternative', pp. 383–4.
[13] Werth, 'Big Candles', 149–50.
[14] *SSP-CR*, p. 153. [15] *SSP-CR*, p. 168.

survive, but the Zbruch idol (Plate 2) may give us some idea of what these objects looked like.

The determined resistance of the Luticians gave rise to new and disturbing ideas about how Christians should deal with pagans. On 7 June 1066, Gottschalk, the Christian prince of one of the still largely pagan West Slavic peoples, the Obodrites, was assassinated by one of his pagan subjects and anti-Christian violence spread throughout the southern Baltic region. The situation got so bad that in 1108 the bishops and nobility of eastern Germany addressed a plea to their peers in the rest of Germany as well as in France and Flanders, the Magdeburg Letter, complaining in lurid (and probably exaggerated) terms about the cruelty of the pagans. The Obodrites 'profaned the churches of Christ with their idolatry, [and] demolished the altars', and they were portrayed as offering human heads to the god Pripegala, while they 'rip the entrails out of others, cut off their hands and feet, tie them up and, to mock our Christ, they say: "Where is your God?"' The language of the Magdeburg Letter underlined the Obodrites' status as apostates: they pretended to be Christians when they pillaged German lands, and they knew enough of the Christian story to be able to mock the death of Christ.[16]

The lands of the West Slavs were not the only place in Europe where the Catholic church was struggling to make headway at this time. In the mountainous South Slavic Balkan nation of Bosnia, nominally Christianised in the ninth century, Christianity seemingly took a deviant form – although whether the Bosnian church really

[16] *SSP-CR*, pp. 88–91.

did teach 'dualism' remains disputed. Yuri Stoyanov has argued that the Bosnian church may have acquired its distinctive characteristics from a fusion of Christianity with the still-surviving pre-Christian religion of Bosnia's remote mountain regions.[17] If true, this would make Bosnia unique as a region where contact with pre-Christian religion altered the ideological superstructure of Christianity (to create a 'heretical' form of the faith) rather than undergoing some sort of transformation into deviant 'Christianesque' popular Christianity at the lower levels of society, as occurred elsewhere in Europe. Yet even the papacy engaged in some formal compromises with pre-Christian practices, such as Pope Innocent III's 1214/15 decree that the Estonians could dispose of their dead according to custom, thus potentially allowing the continuation of cremation.[18] What did not occur in northern Europe (at least so far as we know) was the development of organised 'heretical' forms of Christianity based on contact between Christianity and pre-Christian traditions.

Documents like the Magdeburg Letter seeded the idea that, if it was possible for Christians to wage a holy war against Muslims in order to gain control of the holy places in Jerusalem, perhaps it might also be justifiable to launch a crusade against pagans in Europe. In 1144, Pope Eugenius III launched the Second Crusade against the forces of Islam, and on 11 April 1147, Eugenius issued the bull *Divina dispensatione* ('By divine dispensation') at Troyes, at the urging of the Cistercian preacher Bernard of Clairvaux and Saxon princes, offering complete

[17] Stoyanov, *The Other God*, pp. 224–6.
[18] Jonuks and Kurisoo, 'To Be or Not to Be …', p. 79.

remission of sins to any Christian who went to wage holy war against the pagan Wends.[19] The bull made clear that no tribute was to be extracted from the Wends while they remained pagans, and the Annals of Magdeburg further glossed the pope's intention: 'that [the crusaders] should either subjugate [the Slavs] to the Christian religion, or destroy them entirely by the help of God'.[20] *Divina dispensatione* set aside the traditional justifications for crusade (such as the protection of pilgrims and the safety of the holy places in Jerusalem) and advanced a novel idea of conversion by warfare, so that from henceforth 'the campaign east of the Elbe River [was] … nothing more than a continuation of the normal process of land acquisition under the novel rubric of crusade'.[21]

The Wends were not the only pagan targets of crusaders. Hungary, formally converted to Christianity only after the coronation of King Stephen I in 1000, was menaced by nomadic tribes such as the Cumans who threatened to draw the Magyar kingdom back into 'the nomad "pagan" world' from which it came.[22] The Cumans, otherwise known as the Kipchaks or Polovtsians, were a nomadic Turkic people who (like the Polabian Slavs) proved resistant to Christianisation.[23] It was in order to deal with the Cumans that, in 1211, King Andrew II of Hungary invited an order of crusaders from the Levant, the Teutonic Knights, to begin another crusade.[24]

[19] *Pommersches Urkundbuch*, p. 13 (no. 32).
[20] *Pommersches Urkundbuch*, p. 15 (no. 34).
[21] Reynolds, *Prehistory of the Crusades*, p. 19.
[22] Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, p. 54.
[23] Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, pp. 68–73.
[24] Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, p. 213.

The Teutonic Knights began to seize Cuman territory, carving out a fiefdom for themselves – a policy they would bring to fruition further north, in Prussia, when invited to launch a crusade against the pagan Prussians by Conrad of Mazovia in 1226.[25] Owing to stiff Prussian resistance and a series of uprisings, it was not until 1274 that the Teutonic Knights established full military control of Prussia; meanwhile another crusading order, the Livonian Brothers of the Sword (or Swordbrethren) established a territory known as Terra Mariana ('the land of Mary') or Livonia (the territory of today's Latvia and Estonia) in the early thirteenth century. The Northern Crusades had begun.

The Northern Crusades and the Renewal of 'Paganism'

On 11 September 1171 (or 1172) Pope Alexander III issued the bull *Non parum animus noster*, directed to the rulers of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, encouraging them 'to defend the truth of the Christian faith bravely and to expand the Christian faith forcefully (*in brachio forti ad propagandam christiani nominis religionem*)' by waging war against the pagan Estonians, who had been attacking Christians. The bull offered a year's remission of penance (indulgence) to those who took part, and full remission of sins to those who died in battle. It mingled exhortations to the Scandinavians to be better Christians with a call to crusade, but the bull exceeded the ostensible justification for crusade in the Holy Land – which was, officially, to

[25] Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, p. 10.

defend and protect pilgrims to the holy places – by calling for the aggressive expansion of the Christian faith as well as defence. In doing so, it sailed perilously close to asserting that Christians could be converted by force rather than choosing to convert voluntarily.[26] Conversions by force were not uncommon *in fact*, of course – but they remained *in theory* illegitimate, and for the papacy to approve them in an official document was a significant development.

The use of violence to expand the Christian faith has always faced a paradox. The greater the energy that gets devoted to military efforts against non-Christians, the less energy – and will – there is available to actually convert them to Christianity. The pagans, in this situation, become an enemy, and therefore an other – thereby removing the motivation to convert them and assimilate them into Christendom. Furthermore, such conversion became harder if people's only experience of Christianity was extreme violence. Christian violence thus failed to achieve the stated objective of the Christian faith, which was the expansion of the church by converting non-Christians to Christianity. On a purely practical level, it is difficult to convert people when you are mounting a military campaign against them, because a military campaign implies the establishment of a frontier beyond which missionaries, as agents of the enemy army, will struggle to penetrate. Furthermore, while a trickle of missionaries might well lead to the gradual familiarisation of an unconverted people with Christianity, an all-out military assault hardened people against Christianity as an external threat and united them in solidarity

[26] Fonnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades*, pp. 59–61.

against it. Indeed, Eric Christiansen has argued that the pre-Christian religion of the West Slavs 'gained in vigour under assault from outside', while Baltic religion showed 'remarkable powers of development' under the threat of annihilation by the Teutonic Knights.[27]

Just as national identities are often formed under attack, so the Northern Crusades may well have created more potent and enduring iterations of pre-Christian religion by attacking unchristianised peoples. Paradoxically, waging crusade against pre-Christian religions ensured that those religions would survive for much longer than they might have done otherwise. The period of the Baltic Crusades was characterised by repeated rebellions of peoples who were supposed to be subject to Christian rule, such as the St George's Night Uprising in Estonia on 22 April 1345. According to the chronicler Hermann of Wartberge,

> a day before the festival of St George the neophytes of the bishopric of Reval relapsed from the faith; they killed their lords and all the Germans together with their little children; … they cut up women with swords and transfixed the children that fell out of their wombs with lances; they burned down their houses and other edifices; they set fire to the churches, as well as the monastery of Pades; they slaughtered 28 monks, turning aside their pleas, while the abbot escaped together with a few … on top of this, as the story goes, they seized an image of the cross from a hospital in front of the city and hung it at the gallows next to the hanged bodies, and, so it is said, they also crucified a Christian boy in the same manner as the Lord was crucified.[28]

[27] Christiansen, *Northern Crusades*, p. 40.

[28] The Chronicle of Hermann of Wartberge, quoted in Kaljundi, 'Pagans into Peasants', p. 387.

Hermann's account echoed the much earlier Magdeburg Letter in portraying the Estonians as cruel, bestial pagans and apostates, and even drew on the anti-Semitic tradition of accusing non-Christians of parodying Christ's death through child-murder. But another chronicler, Wigand of Marburg, saw the matter quite differently – and he effectively blamed the uprising on the Christians:

In the year 1343, at the time of Master Luter [Ludolf], when the Danish king was still ruling in the land of Reval, etc., the knights and vassals of the king repressed the people with such burdens and torments that they in pain and sorrow complained to the master and the brothers, especially those who are commonly called Estonians, Öselians, as well as other common people. Their violence was so great that they dishonoured their wives, deflowered virgins, took away their possessions, and used them as slaves. Because of this the Estonians, the Harriensians and the Öselians rose up against them and sent [envoys] to the king to ask whether he was willing to protect them against such oppression, as they preferred to die rather than to live under such a yoke, and if a stop were not put to this, they would complain to God and his saints.[29]

While Hermann's Estonians are evil pagans, Wigand presents the Estonians as disgruntled Christians with a just cause.[30] The chroniclers' differing interpretation of the St George's Night Uprising reveals an important tension in medieval Christian attitudes to 'pagans'. On the one hand, there could be no doubt that idolatry was

[29] Wigand of Marburg, *Chronica nova Prutenica*, quoted in Kaljundi, 'Pagans into Peasants', p. 371.

[30] On medieval accounts of the St George's Day Uprising see Kaljundi, 'Pagans into Peasants', pp. 363–74.

abhorrent, and that it was the worship of demons. But on the other hand, pagans could not just be dismissed as barbarians or wild beasts if they were to be brought to faith. Evangelisation entailed recognition of the pagan capacity for rationality, which in turn implied that some degree of rationality might be found within pagan religion.[31] John Mandeville's account of his supposed travels in central Asia (which were almost certainly fictitious, but nevertheless revealing of changing attitudes) drew attention to 'virtuous pagans', who Mandeville held up as an unflattering mirror to the vices of European Christians.[32] Similarly, the German chronicler Peter of Duisburg sought to use a fictionalised account of Baltic pagans to draw attention to Christian failings, telling an elaborate tale of a great shrine called Romuva where the Balts came together to sacrifice to their gods, presided over by a high priest called the Krive (Plate 3). This unity of the ostensible enemies of Christendom was intended to put the disunity of the Christians to shame.[33]

The tension between simply dominating unchristianised peoples on the one hand, and ensuring their sincere conversion on the other, was a particular issue in the Baltic Crusades, because the arrival of crusading military orders in the region resulted in the creation of monastic-military states rather than the incorporation of formerly pagan territories into any existing polity. It was thus in the interests of the military orders who ruled Prussia and much of Livonia that the native peoples remain essentially pagan,

[31] Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another's Word*, p. 29; Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography*, pp. 32–3.
[32] Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another's Word*, pp. 113–44.
[33] Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, pp. 125–8.

as their conversion raised uncomfortable questions about sovereignty, self-government, and equality with the knights themselves. The Teutonic Knights were routinely criticised for not giving converted peoples under their dominion the same rights as Germans,[34] although the Order did raise a 'native militia' to fight alongside the knights.[35] While many in Prussia and Livonia did convert, they were given the status of 'neophytes' – newly baptised converts who were denied the privileges of the German settlers. However, it is striking that Prussian, Latvian, and Estonian pre-Christian religion survived into the early modern period after three centuries of Christian rule, which strongly suggests that the military orders either deliberately avoided Christianising the people they ruled, or were simply unequipped to do so.[36] Tiina Kala has drawn attention to the fact that baptism during the Baltic Crusades in Livonia often functioned not so much as a sacrament, but rather as a form of treaty confirmation or as confirmation of the defeat of native resistance.[37] The military orders were not, after all, preaching or missionary orders. Crusade, even when successful, resulted in conquest – not sincere conversion or effective Christianisation.

Throughout the period of their occupation of Prussia and Livonia the crusaders' focus was not on the conversion of their existing territories but on the prosecution of crusade against the pagans who continued to resist: most notably the Lithuanians, who not only resisted the

[34] Urban, *Teutonic Knights*, p. 106.
[35] Urban, *Teutonic Knights*, p. 57.
[36] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, pp. 173–5.
[37] Kala, 'Rural Society', pp. 178–9.

knights but also expanded their own territory southwards and eastwards to create a vast multi-religious polity, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Just as commentators on the New World were faced with the puzzle of how savage idolaters created the sophisticated civilisations of Central and South America,[38] so earlier commentators on the Baltic had to explain how Lithuanian idolaters created one of medieval Europe's largest empires. Commentators on idolatry in the New World discovered a tension between the need to see idolaters as 'capable of becoming Christians' and the urge to shun them as 'incorrigible idolaters, physically monstrous beings or irrational animals',[39] and similar tensions existed in medieval commentary on Old World pagans. 'Pagans' became an ethnic stereotype; people who were incorrigible idolaters beyond the pale of Christendom rather than eager potential converts waiting to be imprinted with the character of baptism. This is the mentality that Vera Matuzova described as the 'mental frontier' in the Northern Crusades, which made it more or less impossible for the two sides to understand one another.[40]

While Kyivan Rus' was ravaged by Mongol armies in the thirteenth century, the Lithuanians were largely protected by the dense forests and marshes of their homeland and, from the mid-thirteenth century onwards they capitalised on the misfortune of the Rus' principalities (in what is now Belarus and Ukraine) and began to seize

[38] Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography*, pp. 217–19.
[39] Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography*, p. 292.
[40] Matuzova, 'Mental Frontiers', p. 258.

control of them.[41] The Lithuanians always adopted a pragmatic approach to religion; like the Vikings in Britain and Ireland, the Lithuanians had no interest in 'converting' anyone they conquered to their own religion – and, indeed, it is highly likely that such an idea would have made sense to them, insofar as proselytism is largely associated with the Abrahamic faiths. Lithuanian princes who went to rule over Orthodox principalities often adopted Orthodoxy, and Lithuanian grand dukes took Christian wives who maintained their own priests and chapels. What mattered was that the grand duke himself maintained the pre-Christian state cult.

The Lithuanians fiercely maintained their independence, allying with the Semigallians in 1236 to destroy the Livonian Swordbrethren at the Battle of Saule; thereafter the Teutonic Knights took over the Swordbrethren's lands in Livonia. However, in 1251 Grand Duke Mindaugas made the surprising decision to convert to Christianity when his nephew Tautvila had himself baptised and fled to Riga, gaining the support of the archbishop of Riga and the Teutonic Order for a campaign for the Lithuanian throne. Faced by this threat, Mindaugas invited the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order to Lithuania and a diplomatic exchange of gifts took place. Crucially, the Grand Master promised Mindaugas a crown from the pope if he would accept baptism, and Mindaugas was baptised along with his family and a few of his followers (although there was no attempt at a mass baptism of the Lithuanian people). Mindaugas sent an envoy to Pope

[41] On Lithuania's early successes see Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, pp. 49–81.

Innocent IV, who approved the coronation and anointing of Mindaugas as king of Lithuania, as well as the consecration of a bishop for the country. Mindaugas accepted the pope's special protection, rendering Lithuania a papal fief. In return, Mindaugas granted the Teutonic Knights lands in Samogitia.[42]

The *Galician-Volhynian Chronicle* cast doubt on the sincerity of Mindaugas's conversion to Christianity, however:

> His baptism was a mere artifice and he continued to offer sacrifice to his gods in secret: to Nonadej, Teljavel, Diverikis, to the hare god [and] Mejdejn. Whenever he rode into a field and saw a hare running into it, he felt he was not allowed to step into a forest, let alone break a branch there. He sacrificed to his gods, cremated his dead and openly practised paganism.[43]

The author of the *Chronicle*'s expectations of a new Christian may have been unrealistically high; Lithuania did not undergo Christianisation in Mindaugas's reign, and therefore he was the newly Christian king of a pagan kingdom. The king's observance of ritual taboos and ongoing adherence to pre-Christian customs of cremation are unsurprising, and are similar to the behaviour of newly converted rulers in other regions. Even sacrifice to the gods may have been ritually required of the king; the fact of conversion did not necessarily make it straightforward to abandon court rituals, especially in a warrior society like Lithuania where the unchristianised nobility apparently exerted great influence. We should not assume, therefore, that Mindaugas's continued

[42] Mažeika, 'When Crusader and Pagan Agree', pp. 198–203.
[43] Quoted in *LBM*, p. 71.

adherence to pre-Christian practices was a mark of insincerity, even if the king was hardly a model of Christian piety. Mindaugas had not even begun the conversion of Lithuania, which had no bishop, no dioceses, no churches, and no priests – and his rule relied, at least in part, on the favour of the nobility.

Mindaugas was crowned (according to tradition) on 6 August 1253, turning Lithuania into a kingdom, 'the youngest daughter of the church'. However, Mindaugas's land grant to the Teutonic Knights in Samogitia came back to bite him. The Samogitians had no intention whatsoever of accepting subjugation to the Teutonic Knights. At the Battle of Durbe on 13 July 1260 the Samogitians slaughtered more knights than in any other battle of the Baltic Crusades, and killed the Livonian Master of the Order and the Prussian Land Marshal. Not only that, but the battle unleashed pagan revolts in Prussia, Semigallia, Courland, and Saaremaa that went on for years and very nearly unravelled the entire complex of crusader states in the Baltic. As for Mindaugas, he tried to save his own skin by expelling or killing members of the Teutonic Order in Lithuania, and probably destroyed the cathedral he had begun building in Vilnius or turned it over to pagan worship. According to the *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle*, a nobleman named Treniota persuaded Mindaugas to abandon Christianity – although it remains unclear if he really did so. But either way, Mindaugas was assassinated by the Lithuanian nobility and the nation reverted to its pre-Christian ways.[44]

[44] Mažeika, 'When Crusader and Pagan Agree', pp. 213–14; Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, pp. 51–2.

The failure of Christianity in Lithuania was much more than just a temporary setback for the church. Mindaugas's disastrous conversion turned subsequent Lithuanian rulers decisively against Christianity, and even led them to develop a 'state cult' of their own which imitated Christianity in some respects – perhaps another case of Werth's 'internal reformation'. This state cult, which seems to have been different from the religion of ordinary Lithuanians, was centred upon a temple in Vilnius (Mindaugas's former cathedral and the only temple so far identified in Lithuania) and a place called Šventaragis at the confluence of the Rivers Vilnia and Neris, where the bodies of Lithuania's grand dukes were traditionally burnt.[45] Indeed, the ritualised cremation of leading figures seems to have been central to the Lithuanian state cult, and in 1262 an Old Slavonic translation of the *Chronicle* of John Malalas recounted the myth of Sovij, who had lived in the time of Abimelech and introduced cremation to the Lithuanians, Estonians, Prussians, and Yotvingians.[46] S. C. Rowell has argued that 'Sovidom', where the ritual cremation of leaders prevailed, was 'almost an inverse of Christendom' in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[47] Markers of 'pagan' identity, such as cremation on pyres, seem to have become especially important to the Lithuanians at the same time as their courts and chanceries, filled with Orthodox scribes writing in Old Slavonic and Catholic friars writing in Latin, became ever more like those of neighbouring Christian rulers.

[45] Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, pp. 132–40. On the Lithuanian state cult see also Vaitkevičius, 'Main Features of the State Religion', pp. 289–356.

[46] *LBM*, p. 188. [47] Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, p. 130.

Bartholomaeus Anglicus: A Thirteenth-Century Friar on the Unchristianised Edge

In around 1240, an English Franciscan friar, who we know only as 'Bartholomew the Englishman' (or Bartholomaeus Anglicus), compiled a vast encyclopaedia at the school of Magdeburg, *On the Properties of Things*. Magdeburg was the headquarters of the Saxon province of the Franciscan friars, which played an important role in trying to bring Christianity to unchristianised peoples who lay to the east of the German lands; indeed, Magdeburg had begun life as a frontier town regularly attacked by the pagan Slavs and Magyars. Although Bartholomew's interests were truly encyclopaedic – he was interested in every part of the known world – his commentary on previously undiscussed regions in Europe's far north and east sets his writings apart from those who merely rehashed the works of ancient geographers. It is possible that friars returning to Magdeburg from missions in Prussia and Livonia were one source of Bartholomew's information (which is not found in any other source), although the Cistercian bishop of Prussia, Christianus de Oliva, is another possibility.[48] Bartholomew's connection with the east was further strengthened by his appointment as bishop of the Polish see of Łuków, then a frontier bishopric under regular attack from Baltic tribes, but he died in 1272 before he could take up his see.

Bartholomew's work as an encyclopaedist was an integral part of his religious calling; Francis of Assisi, the founder

[48] Seymour, *Bartholomaeus Anglicus*, p. 167. On medieval knowledge of the Baltic region see Tamm, 'A New World into Old Words', pp. 11–36.

of his order, had been famous not only for talking to animals but also for being willing to talk to any human being: most notably an audience with Sultan Melek al-Kamil in Egypt in 1219.[49] The Franciscan Order's missionary ambitions exceeded those of any other Catholic religious order, with a mission to Armenia and Persia launched in 1279 and a mission to China and 'Tartary' a decade later.[50] Such vast ambitions required some understanding of the peoples who lay beyond Christendom, which the friars John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck, as 'forerunners of modern anthropologists', attempted to provide, supplying detailed information on the practices of Turkic tribes.[51] Bartholomew aimed to provide an even more wide-ranging understanding of the unchristianised world – albeit on the basis of rumour and hearsay. For example, Bartholomew reported that the Slavs were either Catholic, Orthodox, or still pagan,[52] even though all Slavs had long since been converted to Christianity by his time, and he made some striking errors of geography. He was vague about northern Fennoscandia, calling it 'Vinland' (in apparent confusion with the Vinland of the Norse sagas, which was North America) and failing to distinguish the Sámi from the Finns. However, Bartholomew is among the earliest sources for some of the stereotypes of the Sámi that would endure for many centuries thereafter, such as the idea that the Sámi were sorcerers who sold wind to sailors:

[49] Freeman, 'Francis of Assisi', 57–75.
[50] Robson, *Franciscans in the Middle Ages*, pp. 108–18.
[51] Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, p. 47.
[52] Bartholomaeus Anglicus (ed. Seymour), *On the Properties of Things*, vol. 2, p. 806.

The men thereof are strange and somewhat wild and fierce, and occupied with witchcraft. And so to men that sail by here … lacking wind, they proffered wind for sale, and sell wind. And they make a bundle of thread and various knots joined therein, and wait to draw out of the bundle three knots, or more or less as he would have the wind stronger or gentler. And for their misbelief, fiends move the air and awake a strong or gentle tempest, as he draws more or less knots from the bundle. And sometimes he moves the wind so strongly that wretches who believe in such things are drowned, as their rightful doom.[53]

Bartholomew seemed clearer about the geography of the eastern Baltic, providing commentary on four nations he called Lectonia (Lithuania), Livonia, Rivalia (northern Estonia), and Semigallia (part of Latvia). As far as Bartholomew was concerned these were all provinces of 'Scythia', a general term for the vast tracts of eastern Europe which, at the time Bartholomew wrote (and apparently unbeknownst to him), were under attack from the Mongols: Kyiv fell to the Mongol armies in 1240. Bartholomew's Scythia began at the Don delta and stretched between the Danube and the ocean to Germany, following the geographical lead of Isidore of Seville.[54] To the east, Scythia was bounded by the Hyperborean Mountains, the home of the north wind, rich in emeralds and gold but guarded by fierce griffins. Here it is difficult to distinguish legend from some vague awareness of the

[53] Bartholomaeus Anglicus (ed. Seymour), *On the Properties of Things*, vol. 2, pp. 822–3 (language and spelling modernised).

[54] Bartholomaeus Anglicus (ed. Seymour), *On the Properties of Things*, vol. 2, p. 810.

real-world Ural Mountains,[55] and it seems unlikely that Bartholomew had much reliable knowledge of anywhere further east than Lithuania.

Bartholomew's description of Lithuania, while brief, was accurate: the Lithuanians were fierce warriors and the country marshy and densely forested, which was its principal defence – so that it was difficult to attack the country in summer and easier in winter when the rivers and lakes froze over.[56] He reported (incorrectly) that the Semigallians derived their name from having mingled with Gauls (so they were 'half-Gauls') and described them as 'strange and unseemly and sharp and cruel'.[57] The people of Livonia, according to Bartholomew, had been successfully converted by the Germans:

> For they worshipped many gods, and asked answers of fiends with misbelieved and cursed sacrifice; and used auguries and made great fires, and burnt them all to ash … With such error of fiends this land was bewitched in old time. Now it is true that by the grace of God and by strength of the Germans this land is delivered of the aforesaid errors, and many countries and lands thereto belonging.[58]

Like many authors before and since, Bartholomew was fascinated by Baltic customs of furnished burials. Northern Estonia (Rivalia) was likewise 'at one time

[55] Bartholomaeus Anglicus (ed. Seymour), *On the Properties of Things*, vol. 2, p. 706.
[56] Bartholomaeus Anglicus (ed. Seymour), *On the Properties of Things*, vol. 2, p. 777.
[57] Bartholomaeus Anglicus (ed. Seymour), *On the Properties of Things*, vol. 2, p. 808.
[58] Bartholomaeus Anglicus (ed. Seymour), *On the Properties of Things*, vol. 2, pp. 777–8 (language and spelling modernised).

strange and far from God and good faith', but was 'now under the faith of Christ and subject to the reign of Denmark'.[59]

Bartholomew's *On the Properties of Things* provides not only a snapshot of Europe's unchristianised edge in the thirteenth century, but also an insight into how that unchristianised edge was viewed by an Englishman. Bartholomew felt able to describe Livonia and Estonia as Christianised because they had come under the authority of Christian nations, without enquiring into whether the ordinary people actually accepted Christianity; and while he made no open mention of crusades, his reference to winter campaigns into Lithuania suggests he believed the Lithuanians and other heathen peoples could be brought to Christianity only by military conquest and the same sort of subjugation that had taken place in Livonia. However, the low population density of Europe's unchristianised edge and its remoteness made it a lower priority for mission than China, whose vast wealth and sophisticated political culture the Venetian traveller Marco Polo had so effectively recounted.

Nevertheless, after the Mongol sack of Kyiv in 1240 Pope Innocent IV became concerned about the Mongol threat in eastern Europe, dispatching the friars John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruck to assess the situation. In a sign of things to come, Carpini reported that the Lithuanians were taking advantage of the carnage left behind by the Mongols to pillage the lands of

[59] Bartholomaeus Anglicus (ed. Seymour), *On the Properties of Things*, vol. 2, p. 800.

southern Rus'.[60] In a bull of 1242 Pope Innocent IV encouraged the Dominicans to convert the Ruthenians 'and other barbarian nations', perhaps referring to the pagan Lithuanians,[61] although it was not until the Lithuanian leader Mindaugas converted to Christianity in 1253 that the appointment of a bishop to the Lithuanians became possible, with a Polish Dominican named Wit (Vitus) taking on the role.[62] Yet the possibility of the Christianisation of Lithuania hung by a thread – and that thread was Mindaugas himself, who faced a rebellion from the Samogitians (whose province he proposed handing over to the Teutonic Order as the price of peace), and who apparently reverted to paganism. Mindaugas's assassination in 1263 sealed the fate of Christianity in Lithuania, and the Grand Duchy embarked on a distinctive path as Europe's last pagan superpower – albeit one that had no interest in imposing paganism on its subjects.[63] Just as in the crisis of the tenth century, the Christianisation of Europe had once more stalled.

Sápmi: Land of the Midnight Sun

Sápmi, once known to English-speakers as 'Lapland', is as much an ethnographic and cultural as a geographical region. Broadly speaking, Sápmi is northern Fennoscandia; it traditionally includes the entire coast of Norway north of Trondheim and the interior of northern Norway, along with large parts of the interior of northern

[60] Baronas and Rowell, *Conversion of Lithuania*, p. 87.
[61] Bzowski, *Propago divi Hyacinthi*, p. 12.
[62] Bzowski, *Propago divi Hyacinthi*, p. 13.
[63] Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, pp. 51–2.

Sweden and the northernmost part of Finland, as well as Russia's Kola Peninsula. The Sámi may have originated from Finland's Lakeland region and migrated across the Gulf of Bothnia into northern Scandinavia in around 500 CE.[64] According to another hypothesis, the Sámi are the descendants of reindeer-hunters who lived in northern Germany until the warming of the late Pleistocene, when they moved north to Fennoscandia as long as ten thousand years ago.[65]

Archaeological evidence suggests that the Sámi once inhabited the entirety of Finland and Karelia.[66] Until around the eighth century the Sámi lived primarily by hunting and fishing, when they began to move to a lifestyle based on semi-nomadic reindeer-herding – a transition that was complete by around 1500. The Sámi would follow the reindeer herd to wherever it could find lichen and moss, subsisting on reindeer milk, cheese, and meat while living in tents made from reindeer skin, which was also used for clothing, harnesses, and many other things. The Sámi might encamp on the sea or lakeshore in summer, while living in a more permanent village (the *siida*) during the darkness of the polar winter.[67] However, linguists distinguish as many ten different Sámi languages, and Sámi culture varies widely over the vast and sparsely populated territory of Sápmi.[68] To this day, geopolitical factors mean that the Sámi of the Kola Peninsula (inside the Russian Federation) are cut off from the increasingly

[64] Bertell, 'Local Sámi Bear Ceremonialism', p. 237.
[65] Shumkin, 'Wizards of Lapland', p. 126.
[66] Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, p. 6.
[67] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 129.
[68] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 131.

interconnected Sámi communities of Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

It is difficult to be certain what Sámi religion was like before contact with Christianity, but its three most prominent features (or at least those that survived long enough to be recorded) were ritual hunts, the *sieidi*, and the *noaidi*. The Sámi believed the world consisted of upper, middle, and lower levels that were held together by a world-tree fixed to the North Star; animals such as bears and wolves might be interpreted as visitants from the upper or lower realms.[69] Bears were hunted in an elaborate ritual,[70] and reindeer (unsurprisingly, given their centrality to the Sámi way of life) were especially venerated in the figure of *Myandash*, the holy white reindeer.[71] The *sieidi* is a concept unique to the Sámi, not easily explainable by analogy to anything more familiar in European religion. A *sieidi* could be an outcrop of stone, a whole mountain, a rock, a piece of wood, or a human-made anthropomorphic figure that designated a particular place in the landscape as sacred.[72] Offerings and sacrifices, such as reindeer antlers and coins, were made at *sieididi* to ensure successful hunting and fishing.[73] However, the Sámi also had *värra-muorra* (anthropomorphic images of the gods) and made offerings to these on a *luoptte* (a wooden table), as depicted in the seventeenth century by Samuel Rheen (Plate 4).[74]

[69] Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, p. 79.
[70] Bäckman and Pentikäinen, 'Sami Religion', p. 8087.
[71] Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, p. 80.
[72] Bäckman and Pentikäinen, 'Sami Religion', p. 8087.
[73] Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, pp. 83–5.
[74] For a depiction and discussion of Rheen's illustration see Joy and Armstrand, 'Beliefs and Practices', pp. 71–2.

The phenomenon of the *noaidi* is linked to the Sámi belief that all humans and animals have two souls or spirits, one of which remains with the body while the other can travel beyond it. The *noaidi* (shaman) underwent a gruelling apprenticeship to become a communicator between human beings and the gods, sending out his soul to negotiate with the divine realm. Spirits of animals or departed human beings could assist the *noaidi* in his trance state.[75] The Sámi people's location at the edge of the known and habitable world has long made them an object of fascination to outsiders – in part, perhaps, because the ancient Greeks ascribed mystical powers to the imagined Hyperboreans who lived in the northernmost regions of the world.[76] While the *Fenni* of Tacitus may or may not have been the Sámi, by the sixth century Procopius was aware of *Skritiphenoi* who travelled on skis and lived in tents made of skin, and Paul the Deacon was the first to mention the importance of reindeer for these people of the extreme north in the eighth century.[77]

The Sámi must have been in contact with the ancestors of the Scandinavians, who settled in the region towards the end of the third millennium BCE and spoke a North Germanic Indo-European language. Scholars have long speculated on the influence of Sámi religion on practices of magic and divination in the Norse world,[78] and Eldar Heide has argued that the Norse practice of *seiðr* (divination and magic) and the idea of *gandr* (a projection

[75] Bäckman and Pentikäinen, 'Sami Religion', p. 8088; Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, p. 103.
[76] Burnett, 'Translating Swedish Colonialism', p. 145.
[77] Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, p. 8.
[78] Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, p. 3.

of a *seiðr*-worker's soul) are of Sámi origin, emerging from Sámi ritual practices of tying knots and spinning (although scholars no longer accept the idea that the Norse word *seiðr* has any etymological link with the Sámi word *sieidi*).[79] Similarly, the Norse idea that it was possible for men to transform themselves into bears (literally or symbolically) in battle – the notion of the 'berserker' – may have derived from Sámi shamanism.[80] But it is also possible that influence travelled the other way and that the Sámi came under some influence from pre-Christian Norse religion; as we shall see, a similar situation of cultural interaction between very different pre-Christian religions can be found in Latvia, where the Baltic Latvians and Finnic Livs seem to have exchanged ideas.

We have no contemporary sources that tell us what pre-Christian Norse people thought of the Sámi. The earliest descriptions of Sámi religions date from after the Norse conversion to Christianity, such as those found in the *Historia Norvegiae* ('History of Norway'), which was probably written before 1200 and offers the earliest account of the Sámi *noaidi* (shaman), even if the text makes no distinction between the Sámi and 'Finns':

A person will scarcely believe their unendurable impiety and the extent to which they practise heathen devilry in their magic arts. There are some who are worshipped by the ignorant masses as though they were prophets, since, whenever questioned, they will give many predictions to many folk through the medium of a foul spirit which they call *gand*, and these

[79] Heide, 'Spinning *Seiðr*', pp. 164–70. On the rejected *sieidi* link see Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, p. 26 n.31.
[80] Tolley, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic*, pp. 587–8.

auguries come true. Furthermore they attract to themselves desirable objects from distant parts in an astounding fashion and miraculously reveal hidden treasures, even though they are situated a vast distance away.[81]

Likewise, the *Historia Norvegiae* offers the earliest description of a Sámi *noaidi*'s 'shamanic' trance:

Once, when Christians who had come to trade had sat down at table with some Finns, their hostess fell forward all of a sudden and expired. While the Christians felt serious grief at this calamity, the Finns were not in the least saddened, but told them that the woman was not dead, merely pillaged by the *gands* of her adversaries, and that they could quickly restore her. Then a magician, spreading out a cloth under which he might prepare himself for intoning unholy sorcerer's spells, raised aloft in his outstretched hands a small vessel similar to a riddle, decorated with tiny figures of whales, harnessed reindeer, skis, and even a miniature boat with oars; using these means of transport the demonic spirit was able to travel across tall snowdrifts, mountain-sides and deep lakes. After chanting incantations for a very long time and leaping about there with this paraphernalia, he finally threw himself to the ground, black all over like a negro and foaming at the mouth as if he were mad; ripped across his stomach, with a mighty roar he eventually relinquished his life.[82]

The *Historia Norvegiae* was important for ensuring that Sámi ritual practices were coded as sorcery rather than as religion. While trances and 'shamanic' behaviour were not wholly absent from the Classical world – the trances of the Pythia at Delphi, the ecstasies of Bacchantes, and

[81] Ekrem and Mortensen (eds.), *Historia Norwegie*, p. 61.
[82] Ekrem and Mortensen (eds.), *Historia Norwegie*, p. 63.

the phenomenon of 'nympholepsy' (ecstasies induced by encounters with nymphs), for example – these were exceptional or fringe religious phenomena in the Classical world. They were easily written off as 'superstition' (unacceptable religion), and consequently they did not usually form part of Christians' conceptual template for understanding the pre-Christian religions they encountered in the northern world. The decision of external observers to classify Sámi practices as magic rather than religion would have serious long-term consequences for the Sámi, which, as we shall see, reverberate into modern times.

Finland and Karelia: Sweden's Pagan Hinterland

While the interior of Finland in the Middle Ages was largely inhabited by the Sámi, the Finns themselves lived on the Baltic coast, while a closely related people, the Karelians, inhabited the shore of the White Sea and the Karelian isthmus between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga (where the city of St Petersburg would be built in 1703). In common with most other Finno-Ugric-speaking peoples in the thirteenth century, the Finns and Karelians were barely (if at all) Christianised, although they were beginning to come under the influence of Christian polities from both east and west. The circumstances and chronology of Finland's adoption of Christianity are somewhat murky. According to the traditional chronology of Finnish history, two crusades were undertaken by Swedes against pagans in Finland – the first by King Erik IX in the 1150s and the second in the 1230s by Birger Jarl. However, the 'First Swedish Crusade', along with

the English Bishop Henry who supposedly became the apostle of Finland, seems to have been a legend elaborated by clerics of Uppsala Cathedral in the thirteenth century.[83] Similarly, Birger Jarl's campaign is attested only in the *Erik Chronicle*, compiled almost a century after the events it describes.

A third campaign, led by Marshal Torgils Knutsson in 1292–3, is better attested, but it may have been as much about securing Finland for Sweden against the Orthodox Novgorodians as it was about subduing Finnish pagans.[84] Thomas Lindkvist has argued that, while Swedish military expeditions to Finland clearly took place, they were retrospectively re-envisioned as crusades owing to the popularity of courtly and chivalric conventions, and Christianity seems to have been introduced slowly to Finland rather than being imposed in any sudden way by means of conquest.[85] By the fourteenth century, Finland had been brought definitively within Catholic Sweden's sphere of influence, even if the true extent of the country's Christianisation remains unclear.

In the 1280s Sweden attempted further expansion into Karelia, a region contested by the Republic of Novgorod. While Novgorod was an Orthodox polity, the Novgorodians were more focussed on trade than on conversion and historically made little attempt to convert adherents of pre-Christian religions in their sphere

[83] Lindkvist, 'Crusades and Crusading Ideology', pp. 122–3. By contrast, Jens Olesen considers the idea of a Swedish crusade in the 1150s consistent with what we know of the period (Olesen, 'Swedish Expeditions', pp. 256–9).

[84] Lindkvist, 'Crusades and Crusading Ideology', p. 124.

[85] Lindkvist, 'Crusades and Crusading Ideology', pp. 128–30.

of influence. However, the spread of the Christian faith was an integral part of Sweden's territorial expansion; in 1256/7 Valdemar Birgersson had obtained a bull from Pope Alexander IV that authorised a crusade against 'Karelians and other pagans', and Swedish chronicles portrayed the establishment of a fortress at Viborg on the Karelian isthmus in 1293 as the pacification and conversion of the Karelians. The real enemy, as far as the Swedes were concerned, was not the Karelians but the 'infidel' Novgorodians who competed for their allegiance.[86] However, judging from later accounts of Orthodox missionary activity in the fifteenth century (which will be considered in Chapter 2), the Karelians were far from converted.[87]

Estonia: Animists of the Baltic?

Moving south, across the Gulf of Finland, we come to Estonia, the home of another Finnic people whose language is closely related to Finnish. Estonia, however, is geographically part of the Baltic as well as the Fennoscandian world. In the thirteenth century the Narva River and Lakes Peipus and Pihkva, which now separate Estonia from Russia, separated the Estonians from their Finno-Ugric neighbours the Votians, Vepsians, and Izhorians, pagan peoples within the sphere of influence of the Novgorodian Republic.[88] Estonia's southern border was defined ethnographically and linguistically rather

[86] Lind, 'Consequences of the Crusades', pp. 142–5.
[87] Lind, 'Consequences of the Crusades', p. 148.
[88] On the Votians, Vepsians, and Izhorians in this period see Nazarova, 'The Crusades against Votians and Izhorians', pp. 177–96.

than geographically, as Estonian-speaking communities shaded into areas inhabited by Baltic-speaking Latgalians, Semigallians, and Curonians (who we will encounter in due course). However, there were also Finno-Ugric people further south, in what is today Latvia: the Livs, who gave their name to Livonia and inhabited the shores of the Gulf of Riga. Estonia was and is a coastal nation, with islands in the Gulf of Riga forming an important part of its landmass; the largest of these, Saaremaa (called Ösel by Baltic Germans), was to prove one of the most resilient holdouts of pre-Christian Estonian religion. However, Saaremaa was also a haven for pirates and it was for this reason, as well as its strategic importance as an island in the Baltic, that it attracted the attention of King Valdemar II of Denmark.

In 1206 Valdemar led an expedition to Saaremaa 'to take vengeance on the pagans and subject the nations to the Christian faith'. He built a wooden fort but could find no one willing to remain and face the constant attacks from the Estonians, so the Danes burnt the fort.[89] However, this brief Danish occupation of Saaremaa was a sign of things to come. While the leader of the Livs, Caupo, enthusiastically embraced Christianity, the Estonians resisted – most memorably in the person of Lembitu, who led the Estonians into battle on St Matthew's Day (21 September) 1217 and was killed, largely putting an end to armed resistance to Christianity on the Estonian mainland.[90] Estonia was incorporated into Livonia, the territory ruled jointly by the archbishops of Riga and

[89] Nielsen, 'The Missionary Man', pp. 103–5.
[90] Kivimäe, '*Servi Beatae Marie Virginis*', p. 208.

other bishops and the Livonian Swordbrethren (later the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Knights).

Estonian religion has been characterised as a form of animism – or indeed 'animatism', to use Ivar Paulson's term for the Estonian anthropomorphism of the forest as a singular being, as opposed to animistic veneration of the spirits within individual living things.[91] The spirits of the forest could appear to people in animal, human, or therianthropic (half-human, half-animal) forms.[92] Certain stones in the forest were deemed sacred, and these *hiis* sites were where Estonians made offerings of berries, feathers, or bones for the forest spirits (or the forest itself) – although in later times, these 'offerings' or sacrifices came to resemble something more like a magical rite practised by hunters to ensure success.[93] However, no systematic account of pre-Christian Estonian religion exists, and matters are hampered by the influence of nineteenth-century Romantic reconstructions of Estonian belief.[94]

The Balts: Indo-European Pagans

In contrast to the other peoples who remained largely unchristianised in the late Middle Ages and early modern period, who were all speakers of Finno-Ugric languages, the Balts were speakers of a group of Indo-European languages. With a probable homeland in the Dnieper basin in what is today northern Ukraine, the proto-Balts

[91] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 62.
[92] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 69.
[93] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 71.
[94] Kala, 'Rural Society', p. 171.

expanded north in the second millennium BCE until they occupied a huge region stretching from the River Vistula and the Gulf of Gdańsk in the west to the now-Russian city of Oryol on the River Oka in the east.[95] However, later Slavic expansion compressed the Balts into a more restricted area on the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, roughly coterminous with today's Lithuania, Latvia, and Kaliningrad Oblast (the former Prussia). Today, the only surviving Baltic languages both belong to the East Baltic group: Lithuanian and Latvian. Prussian, the principal West Baltic language, is now extinct – as are the Prussian people themselves, who became assimilated into the German-speakers of east Prussia. However, in the Middle Ages there were many more Baltic tribes and languages, including Galindian, Yotvingian (or Sudovian), and Skalvian in Prussia, and Curonian, Semigallian, Selonian, and Latgalian in what is today Latvia.[96]

The Baltic peoples seem to have shared broadly similar religious traditions, which differed from those of their Finno-Ugric neighbours. Like the Finno-Ugric peoples, the Balts regarded certain forests as sacred, as well as certain animals that lived in them. However, the Balts seem to have turned to agriculture and pastoralism sooner than the Finno-Ugric peoples, which had an impact on their religious outlook.[97] The thunder god Perkūnas, associated with oak trees, occupied an especially important place in late medieval Lithuanian religion, and as the

[95] Pronk, 'Balto-Slavic', p. 270. On the furthest extent of prehistoric Baltic inhabitation see Zinkevičius, *History of the Lithuanian Language*, pp. 12–14.
[96] Gouguenheim, *Les dernier païens*, pp. 25–35.
[97] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 74.

Balts held certain trees and stones to be sacred, both sacrifice and perpetual fires played a role in their worship, as well as in divination. The cremation of the dead and annual meals in honour of the ancestors were accorded great importance. A distinctive feature of Baltic religion was the importance of the cult of snakes, which were fed during ritual meals.[98] However, we must be cautious in attempting to construct medieval Baltic religion from sources that usually recorded it in a late, post-medieval phase of its existence – and we must also not assume that a single religion united the Balts.

There were significant religious differences between the Lithuanians and Latvians, with the Latvians worshipping around a hundred divine 'mothers' who were apparently unknown in Lithuania or Prussia. It is possible that the Latvian cult of the mothers represented a sort of 'religious substrate' of the region: a religious inheritance of earlier Finno-Ugric inhabitants of what is now Latvia, who influenced the Balts who settled there.[99] Similarly, the limited evidence for the religion of Samogitia (western Lithuania) suggests that it differed (at least in emphasis) from that of the rest of Lithuania; for instance, the Samogitians seem to have accorded more importance to the earth deity Žemėpatis than to the thunder god Perkūnas.[100] However, for all the Balts' regional religious differences, their religion was seemingly more comprehensible to late medieval and early modern Christian scholars than the religions of other unchristianised peoples, because it could be interpreted in such a way that it

[98] On Baltic religion see *PEMB*, pp. 14–17.
[99] *LBM*, p. 125. [100] *PEMB*, p. 26.

bore a resemblance to the religion of Greece and Rome. The tendency of commentators to 'classicise' Baltic religion in order to comprehend it will be an important theme of subsequent chapters of this book.

While there were earlier – and disastrous – encounters between the Balts and Christianity (such as Bruno of Querfurt's ill-fated mission to Prussia of 1009, when the unfortunate missionary was hacked to death), the Christianisation of the Balts began in earnest in around 1208, when crusaders moved south from the conquered lands of the Estonians and Livs to confront the Baltic Latgalians. While some of the Latgalians made alliances with the crusaders, the leader of the principality of Jersika in eastern Latvia, Visvaldis, resisted the conquest by allying with the Lithuanians to attack the newly established city of Riga. In 1209 the forces of Albert, archbishop of Riga, captured Visvaldis, who formally handed over his principality to Albert and received it back as a fief.[101] The West Balts then experienced crusade when the Teutonic Knights arrived in Prussia in 1226; but, as we have seen, in spite of the subjugation of Prussia and Latvia (albeit with periodic rebellions), Lithuania remained a free nation.

Great Perm: Christianity Reaches a Finno-Ugric People

In the eleventh century the Rus' city of Novgorod struck out on its own path from the rest of Kyivan Rus', developing its own republican polity based on trade, tribute, and taxation. Religion played only a secondary role in

[101] Nielsen, 'Sterile Monsters?', pp. 238–40.

the expansion of the Novgorodians, although Nikolaj Makarov has noted that priests travelled with tax collectors in the late twelfth century, which may explain the early distribution of Christian objects to the far north.[102] The Novgorodians were the first Russians to reach the rivers flowing into the Arctic Ocean in Russia's far north, and Christian objects travelled along this route to reach a location as remote as Vaygach Island in the Arctic Ocean, where small bronze crosses of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries have been found at sacrificial sites of the Nenets people. However, the presence of Christian objects at sacrificial sites is clearly not evidence for Christianisation in any meaningful sense; in all likelihood, these were exotic objects to the Nenets, suitable as offerings to their gods and spirits.[103] As Makarov noted, when Orthodoxy reached the north in the Middle Ages it did so in an informal manner with Novgorodian traders and was not accompanied by any sort of discipline and oversight;[104] and at some point it presumably ceased to be Christianity at all, but merely a partially understood collection of symbolism belonging to peoples living far to the south.

There is, however, one example of a successful Orthodox mission to an Indigenous people in Europe's far east. The Komi people, otherwise known as Permians or Zyrians, are a Finno-Ugric-speaking people who, in the fourteenth century, occupied a vast swathe of territory west of the Urals that was roughly coterminous with today's Komi Republic and Perm Krai of the Russian

[102] Makarov, 'Far Northern Parts of Ancient Russia', p. 271.
[103] Makarov, 'Far Northern Parts of Ancient Russia', pp. 270–1.
[104] Makarov, 'Far Northern Parts of Ancient Russia', p. 269.

Federation. Far from being simple forest animists, the Permians were a sophisticated people who formed a polity of their own, the principality of Great Perm, centred on the city of Cherdyn.[105] The Kama, Vyatka, and Belaya Rivers (themselves tributaries of the mighty Volga) were central to the prosperity of Great Perm, which was a key trading partner of the Republic of Novgorod. However, the Komis were largely untouched by Christianity until an Orthodox monk from Ustiug (who may have been half Komi himself), Stepan Khrap (Stepan of Perm), undertook an extraordinary missionary journey in 1376. Stepan's mission became the first largely successful mission to a Finno-Ugric-speaking animist people.

Motivated by an eschatological belief in the imminent end of the world,[106] Stepan travelled east along the Rivers Vychegda and Vym into a vast territory of birch forests and swamps; his destination was not Perm's capital at Cherdyn, but rather the Vychegda basin. Here he laboured on converting the animist Komis for the next seven years. Stepan was largely successful – in part, surely, because he relied on persuasion rather than violence, but also because he imitated Cyril and Methodius (the apostles of the Slavs) by devising a distinctive alphabet for the Komi language just as Cyril had devised the Cyrillic alphabet for the Slavs. In doing so he established the principle that a people could be Christianised without being culturally or linguistically Slavicised; in Great Perm, the Orthodox faith would be preached in the Komi language. However, Stepan was uncompromising when it

[105] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 299.
[106] MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, p. 519.

came to idolatry. According to one story, he attacked any images he found in the forest with an axe or set them on fire. The Komis were particularly surprised that Stepan also destroyed the valuable offerings of furs – one of the region's principal trading commodities – left at the shrines; but the monk declared the furs were the property of the devil and refused to profit from them. According to his hagiographer Epiphany the Wise, it was this act of renunciation of wealth that especially impressed the Komis and caused them to embrace Christianity.[107]

What Stepan's hagiographer was describing was the worship of carved wooden statues, sometimes clothed, which the Komis often placed in special shelters along with sacrificial tables. Valuables such as fur and metals were placed in these shrines for safekeeping, or perhaps as offerings, and shamans officiated at religious ceremonies.[108] Komi religion, in common with that of many other eastern European forest peoples, included overarching origin myths about celestial deities but was focussed in practice on the placation of animistic forest spirits who ensured good luck in hunting or fishing, as well as ancestor worship, and these animist beliefs endured long after Christianity had displaced the higher Komi cosmology. The name of one Komi deity, Voipel, is attested in a bishop's letter of 1501, which appealed to the Komi not to sacrifice to this god. Stepan also encountered resistance, however, and a Komi shaman named Pama attempted to organise resistance to Orthodox

[107] Minenko and Zubkov (eds.), *На стыке континентов и судеб*, vol. 1, p. 145.
[108] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 301.

conversion until he was forced to flee to the Urals.[109] Yet Stepan successfully established a bridgehead for Christianity in the Volga-Ural region, much further east than the power of any Slavic principality then extended, even if Cherdyn itself did not embrace Christianity until much later, under Muscovite pressure.

The Mordvins: People of the Great Bend

The term 'Mordvin', which refers today to inhabitants of the Republic of Mordovia within the Russian Federation, is a Russian term that denotes two kindred Finno-Ugric peoples, the Erzians and Mokshans; sometimes the portmanteau name 'Moksherzians' is also used for these peoples. The Mordvins inhabit the 'Great Bend' of the Volga, which marked the limit of Bolgar, Mongol, and Tatar conquest as well as becoming the focal point, at a later period, of the rivalry between the Tatars and expanding Muscovy.[110] Today's Republic of Mordovia is only around 350 kilometres from Moscow, the closest of the Finno-Ugric republics to the Russian capital – although the first Russian incursion into the area did not occur until 1103.[111] In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Mordvins were located between the spheres of influence of the Republic of Novgorod and the Tatar Golden Horde; the latter showed little or no interest in converting animists to Islam, just as Novgorod did little to convert them to Christianity.

[109] On Komi religion see Konakov, 'Komi Religion', pp. 5216–19.
[110] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 147.
[111] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 149.

In Tatyana Devyatkina's view, the Mordvins originally worshipped predominantly female deities; patriarchal gods were a late development in their mythology, perhaps stimulated by contact with Christianity. Indeed, the Mordvin language is without grammatical genders and the gender of some deities is ambiguous. Gods are beings of supernatural knowledge and they are able to transform themselves into human beings, animals, or therianthropic beings, and they sometimes seek liaisons with human women. Deities depend upon one another in a chain of being, such as Tumopaz the god of oak trees, who depends on Viryava the god of forests, who depends in turn on the supreme deity Shkay. Priests who performed sacrifices to avert natural calamities were distinct from the *sodytsyat*, soothsayers who sought out the will of the gods. In exceptional circumstances, such as the foundation of new towns, mills, or even churches the Mordvins would offer a human sacrifice to the god of the earth, Modava.[112] The Mordvins worshipped their ancestors, fire, and trees,[113] although reconstructions of ancient Mordvin religion from recent and contemporary folklore should be treated with caution.

The Chuvashes: At the Edge of Islam

Immediately to the east of the Mordvins, on the western bank of the Volga in the Volga upland, could be found the Chuvashes. Unlike their neighbours the Mordvins, Maris, and Udmurts, the Chuvashes were a Turkic rather

[112] Devyatkina, *Mordvinian Mythology*, pp. 28–30.
[113] Devyatkina, *Mordvinian Mythology*, pp. 30–2.

than a Finno-Ugric people. In the thirteenth century the Chuvashes were vassals of the Golden Horde, but unlike other Turkic peoples in the region they did not adopt Islam.[114] Consequently, the Chuvashes held to Turkic Tengrism,[115] although the Chuvashes know the Turkic sky god Tengri as Tura. A key figure in Chuvash religion is the *yumšă*, who cures various illnesses, performs rituals, traces stolen or lost animals, takes part in weddings, and assists at childbirth. However, the *yumšă* is not a shaman (although András Róna-Tas's description of him as a 'medicine man' is perhaps equally problematic), nor is he a sorcerer – the sorcerer or *tuxatmăš* is a quite different figure in Chuvash belief.[116]

Contemporary Chuvash folk religion is heavily influenced by Islam, and it is not altogether clear when such influence occurred, making it difficult to be sure what Chuvash religion was like in the Middle Ages.[117] However, a distinctive aspect of Chuvash culture is belief in the *kiremet'*, a spirit of a dead person who was evil in life or died a violent death, and the place associated with that spirit.[118] The Chuvash word *kiremet'* derives from Arabic *keremet*, which referred originally to the supernatural power of Islamic saints; but the Chuvashes took this belief in their own direction and, while *kiremet'* were said to be evil, their presence in a place enforced its taboo status and offerings were made to them. Furthermore,

[114] Kiran, 'Language and Culture of the Siberian Chuvash', 19–20.
[115] Kiran, 'Language and Culture', 21.
[116] Róna-Tas, 'Chuvash Religion', pp. 1784–5.
[117] On the Islamicisation of the Chuvashes see Arik, 'Islam among the Chuvashes', 37–54.
[118] Róna-Tas, 'Chuvash Religion', p. 1785.

kiremet' were often conceived of as the spirits of foreigners or outsiders.[119] Overall, however, it is difficult to distinguish elements of pre-Islamic Chuvash belief from the apparent creole religion that existed in Chuvashia at the time ethnographers began to investigate it.

The Maris: Animists of Hill and Meadow

North and east of the Chuvashes, on the eastern bank of the Volga, lie the lands of the Mari people, today known as the Mari El Republic within the Russian Federation, and formerly referred to as the Cheremis people. The Maris are perhaps the best known of all the Finno-Ugric peoples living inside Russia, largely for their adherence to animism; as recently as 1992, the president of Mari El was inaugurated jointly by an Orthodox bishop and an animist priest.[120] The modern context (and revival) of Mari animism will be examined in detail in Chapter 6, but the Maris have apparently lived in their homeland on the Volga for the last eight thousand years and have a strong tradition of political independence and resistance to occupation. In the Middle Ages the Maris traded with and came under the political influence of the Golden Horde, but the Russians intruded more violently; *druzhinniki* (armed adventurers) from the Republic of Novgorod seized the Mari fortress of Koksharov in 1174, and after the foundation of Nizhni Novgorod in 1221 Russian incursions intensified.[121] However, the Maris

[119] On the Chuvash belief in *kiremet'* see Goto, 'Metamorphosis of Gods', 145–58.
[120] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 198.
[121] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 199–202.

responded with aggressive raids of their own in the fourteenth century, which struck as far as Murom, Vladimir, Kostroma, and Vologda, north of Moscow.[122]

The Mari ethnologist Natalya Glukhova divided Mari deities into high 'celestial' gods (such as Kugu Yumo, the supreme deity, the sun god Osh Keche Yumo, and the sky god Kava Yumo) and 'concrete' gods who were responsible for natural phenomena, such as gods of thunder, lightning, sunrise, and so on. However, there were also gods of fire, earth, abundance, and more specific deities such as Kinde Shochyn Yumo, responsible for the rye harvest. The Maris also venerated lower spirits linked to the cult of the ancestors called *kugyzha*, and rites honouring the ancestors were and are central to Mari religion.[123] There are parallels to be drawn between the Mari and Mordvin religions, to the point that they might be seen as regional expressions of the same basic worldview. However, it is important to distinguish the ancient Mari religion, which is known to us only obscurely, from the revived Mari faith of the nineteenth century (discussed in Chapter 6).

The Udmurts: In the Shadow of the Urals

Udmurtia lies between the great Volga bend and the Ural Mountains, on the very easternmost fringe of Europe, on the lower Kama River. Sometimes called 'Votiaks' by the Russians, the Udmurts are a Finno-Ugric people who are renowned for the highest occurrence of a gene for red hair

[122] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 203.

[123] Glukhova, 'Reflections of the Cheremis Religious Beliefs', p. 60. On Mari religion see also Pentikäinen, 'Mari and Mordvin Religion', pp. 5708–11.

among any European people. Their homeland has been suggested as a possible homeland for the proto-Uralic language that branched into the Finno-Ugric and other Uralic language families, and Udmurt culture remains today deeply affected by ancestral animism, with traditional sacrifices still taking place (Plate 5). They once worshipped, among others, the sky god Inmar, the fertility god Kildishin, and a weather god named Kwazh who later came to be blended with the Holy Spirit of Christianity. Like the Mordvins and Maris, the Udmurts also venerate spirits connected with the cult of the ancestors, although these are not so much the ancestors themselves as spirits who protect the well-being of the family.[124] Like the Maris, the Udmurts came under Tatar influence in the Middle Ages, but by 1200 Russian traders from Novgorod and Vladimir-Suzdal had penetrated Udmurtia from the north and begun to demand tribute in furs. In the late fourteenth century Russian peasant settlers established Vyatka Land or the Vyatka Republic to the north of the Udmurt heartland, with a mixed population of Russians, Udmurts, and Besermians. The Vyatka Republic roughly corresponded to today's Kirov Oblast of the Russian Federation, which is immediately north of the Udmurt Republic.[125]

Conclusion

By the thirteenth century, 'pagan' was as much an ethnolinguistic identity as a religious one in northern and

[124] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 253–4.
[125] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 259.

eastern Europe. As missionary activity stalled, religious identity began to coalesce along ethnic lines. Orthodoxy was the religion of the East Slavs, Catholicism of the West Slavs; and Catholicism was likewise the religion of the Germans and Scandinavians. The Finno-Ugric and Baltic peoples fell outside the Christian world, because no mission to them had yet been truly successful; and because there were so few committed Christians who spoke their languages, mission was always a challenge. Crusade was, in a way, more straightforward than mission; the imperative to seize control of the lands of the pagans outweighed any imperative to actually convert them, and even when the pagans were baptised they were accorded second-class status compared to other Christians, as 'neophytes'. As the St George's Day Uprising in Estonia showed, the Christianity of the neophytes did not run deep, and there was a constant risk neophytes might backslide into their pre-Christian religion.

The territories of all the peoples introduced in this chapter were much larger in the Middle Ages than the ethnographic regions they occupy today, and in one case (the Prussians), the people has ceased to exist altogether. In most cases, the peoples discussed here were eventually Christianised – although in the case of the Maris and Udmurts the extent of Christianisation is debatable to this day. However, for all these peoples Christianisation occurred late, between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the case of the eastern Finno-Ugric peoples and the Chuvashes, as well as the Sámi, this was down to their sheer geographical distance from the centres of Christianity; for other peoples, such as the Estonians, Latvians, and Prussians, it was down to the indifference of

the Teutonic Knights to the persistence of pre-Christian religions among the nominal 'neophytes'. For the Lithuanians, however, it was down to military and political resistance to incorporation into the Christian world. It is to the end of that resistance, and to the integration of Lithuania into Christendom, that we now turn.

2

Mere Christianisation

Curiosity and Ethnography in the Fifteenth Century

On the feast of St John the Baptist, 24 June 1410, a vast Polish and Lithuanian army crossed to the west bank of the River Vistula into the territory of the Teutonic Knights, the crusading order that had been menacing the unchristianised peoples of the Baltic – and latterly the newly converted Grand Duchy of Lithuania – since 1226. On 15 July the Polish, Lithuanian, and crusader armies converged in what is now north-eastern Poland at a place called Grunwald, where Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen mocked King Władysław II Jagiełło and Grand Duke Vytautas, the Lithuanian cousins who ruled Poland and Lithuania, by sending them a pair of swords to encourage them to fight. The fight began soon enough; the Lithuanians were initially forced into retreat. But then, as the Grand Master's closest knights set to savage hand-to-hand combat with King Władysław's bodyguard, the Lithuanians returned. Attacking from the rear, they hacked down Von Jungingen and the rest of the Prussian leaders, putting the Teutonic Knights to flight.[1] In the long term, Władysław and Vytautas's victory marked the end of the Northern Crusades and established

[1] The most reliable account of the battle of Grunwald is probably to be found in Celichowski (ed.), *Cronica conflictus*, pp. 15–31, which was written about a year after the battle.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.006

Poland–Lithuania's dominance of east-central Europe for nearly two-and-a-half centuries.

Paradoxically, the Polish–Lithuanian victory over the Teutonic Knights at Grunwald finally made possible the conversion of the Baltic – even though Grand Duke Vytautas's commitment to Christianity, not to mention that of his Lithuanian army, was somewhat lukewarm. Both Jogaila (Władysław's Lithuanian name) and Vytautas were latecomers to baptism and to Christendom, but as king of Poland Jogaila proved himself an astute operator in both secular and ecclesiastical politics. Twenty-three years after Lithuania's formal conversion, the Teutonic Knights were finally compelled to accept Lithuania as part of Christendom. Only one province, the duchy of Samogitia, remained to be formally converted, and Jogaila's successful assertion of his right to convert the province represented another victory for the Jagiellonian dynasty. The conversion of Samogitia marked the beginning of a new era for Christendom: the final elimination, over a millennium after the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, of pre-Christian religions as a political and military threat. The church was faced, instead, with the pastoral and missionary challenge of Christianising populations now politically subject to Christendom but ignorant of or resistant to the Christian faith.

In the great scheme of fifteenth-century history, the project of Christianising Europe's unchristianised peoples might seem an unimportant sideshow when compared to the clash between Christianity and Islam that culminated in the fall of Constantinople in 1453. But the problem of unchristianised peoples would re-emerge with a vengeance at the end of the century, as the age

of discovery dawned and Europeans came into contact with Indigenous peoples and civilisations with no knowledge whatsoever of the Christian God. This was not only the period of the final triumph of Christendom in northern and eastern Europe, however – it was also the age of the Renaissance humanists, who brought a new curiosity and scholarly rigour to bear on the study of pre-Christian beliefs and practices. This chapter will examine the development of the tradition of humanist ethnography in the fifteenth century and its application to pre-Christian peoples, the conversions of Samogitia and the Canary Islands as the last major conversion events of the period in the Old World, and the church's response to the ongoing existence of unchristianised peoples in eastern and northern Europe in the late Middle Ages.

That response was, on the whole, a light touch. What mattered was the 'mere Christianisation' of newcomers to Christendom: their basic acceptance of the fact that their lives were now subordinated to Christianity and to the discipline of the church. The Polish jurist Paweł Włodkowic made this quite explicit, distinguishing 'savage pagans' from 'gentle and peacekeeping, quiet pagans' who 'have voluntarily made themselves subject to their Christian governors'.[2] More searching questions about the reality and depth of people's commitment to the Christian faith, and their abandonment of pagan practices, sometimes went unasked as well as unanswered. The first century of Christendom's victory over paganism thus represented a contrast both with the centuries of

[2] Włodkowic, *Writings*, pp. 115–16.

violent crusade that preceded it and with the centuries of anxious concern and polemic that followed it.

Ethnography Reborn

The idea that ethnography did not exist in the Middle Ages has been challenged by recent scholarship, which has drawn attention to a rich ethnographic tradition in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[3] Nevertheless, it was the fifteenth century that saw the full-blown revival of a classicising ethnography grounded first and foremost in curiosity, even if a Christianising agenda was never wholly absent in discussions of unchristianised peoples beyond the bounds of Christendom. Inspired by Herodotus and other ancient ethnographers, fifteenth-century ethnography was dominated by 'The idea of nations as homogenetic groups, each enjoying direct and unbroken descent from a primordial race of founding fathers and marked by inborn and unchanging traits of character.'[4] This approach to ethnography was underpinned by the biblical narrative of the Book of Genesis; just as all human beings were said to descend from the sons of Noah, so mythical figures such as the three brothers Czech, Lech, and Rus were said to be the progenitors of the Slavs.

A central theme of the European Renaissance was the resolution of potential conflicts between textual authority (the authority of the Bible and other ancient texts) and empirical experience – and this was true especially

[3] On ancient ethnography see Almagor and Skinner (eds.), *Ancient Ethnography*. On medieval ethnography see Classen (ed.), *Meeting the Foreign*; Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another's Word*.

[4] Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, p. 243.

of Christian encounters with peoples who lay beyond the boundaries of the world known to the ancients.[5] Such tensions of interpretation apply most obviously to the European encounter with the New World and its unchristianised inhabitants, but long before Columbus sailed the existence of the peoples of the Canary Islands, the Baltic, and Sápmi raised similar questions. The rediscovery and printing of Tacitus's *Germania* in the 1470s, one of the most important ethnographical texts of the Roman world, introduced a richer language for talking about the customs of non-literate 'barbarian' peoples.[6] As European Christians increasingly came into contact with adherents of ancestral religions in the fourteenth century – such as the Mongols and the Guanches – a strand of sympathetic commentary on paganism developed.[7] By the middle of the sixteenth century, the proto-ethnographer Sebastian Münster, who briefly surveyed the pagans of the Baltic (Plate 6),[8] was prepared to regard pagans in a sympathetic light as those 'who conducted themselves with simple virtue' and had never heard the Gospel preached.[9]

Margaret Meserve has argued that the seemingly inexplicable rise of the Ottoman Turks in Asia Minor (leading eventually to the traumatic fall of Constantinople in 1453) led medieval Christians to become increasingly fascinated by non-Christians.[10] Renaissance authors displayed a

[5] On the epistemological tensions thrown up by fifteenth-century encounters with the other see Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography*, pp. 23–4.
[6] Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography*, p. 42.
[7] Cervantes, *Devil in the New World*, p. 12. On Christian encounters with Mongolia see Khanmohamadi, *In Light of Another's Word*, pp. 57–87.
[8] Münster, *Cosmographiae*, p. 906.
[9] McLean, *Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster*, p. 194.
[10] Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, p. 3.

'compulsion to look to the past in order to make sense of a messy and disturbing present'.[11] The sudden arrival of the Turks exposed the ethnically fluid character of the Eurasian steppe and fuelled renewed interest in the Scythians, Sarmatians, Cimbrians, and other peoples mentioned (but not always reliably located) by Classical authors.[12] While their scholarship was often not as original as humanist authors claimed,[13] the humanist historians of the fifteenth century were asking new questions and developing a new historiography. Meserve identified four characteristics of the 'historiographical revolution' of the fifteenth century: adherence to Classical models of history writing; scepticism towards earlier authorities; a strong interest in rhetoric (including the use of history for rhetorical purposes); and an approach to historical causation that eschewed overt religious claims such as reliance on appeals to divine providence.[14] This revolution enabled historians and ethnographers seeking the origins of unchristianised peoples to go beyond crude stereotypes of bestial idolaters and perceive the humanity of their subjects.

Polar Twilight: Christianity in Sápmi?

We know little about Sápmi in the fifteenth century, although it was during this period that the Sámi made the final transition from a hunter-gatherer society to one based on nomadic and seasonal reindeer-herding.[15]

[11] Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, p. 2.
[12] Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, pp. 152–3.
[13] Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, p. 4. [14] Meserve, *Empires of Islam*, p. 8.
[15] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 129.

It is less clear, however, whether the Sámi were exposed to Christianity in any significant way at this time. Between 1328 and 1553 Swedish *birkarlar* (emissaries of the Swedish king) settled in coastal regions of Kemi Lappmark, Torne Lappmark, Lule Lappmark, and Pite Lappmark, where they enjoyed a monopoly of trade and the right to tax the Sámi inhabitants. Rovaniemi, then a cluster of villages that formed a frontier of trade between Karelia and the western Finns, was established by 1453.[16] The Sámi under Swedish rule were obliged, by an ordinance of 1424, to provide transport with draft reindeer for visitors to Sápmi.[17] Both the Sámi and the Norse *birkarlar* continued to suffer Novgorodian raids until the incorporation of Novgorod into Muscovy in 1478.[18] The *birkarlar* established a handful of churches and chapels in the far north for the use of the Norse community, but there are few records of missionary activity among the Sámi themselves. In 1419 a missionary named Toste was dispatched to Sápmi, perhaps in tardy response to Queen Margarita of Norway's resolution to convert the Sámi in 1389,[19] which was inspired in turn by the visions received by a converted Sámi woman named Margarita.[20]

In the absence of documentary evidence of the presence of Christianity among the Sámi in the fifteenth century, the religious state of pre-Reformation Sápmi must be inferred from later indications of Catholic popular religion in Sámi society. By around 1450 coins started to be offered at *sieididi*,[21] indicating some degree of engagement

[16] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, p. 14.
[17] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, p. 12.
[18] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, p. 23.
[19] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, pp. 90–1.
[20] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', p. 271.
[21] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, p. 84.

between Sámi religion and the Norse world into which the Sámi were gradually being brought. Already, in the fourteenth century the Russian Orthodox monk Lazar Muromsky (1286–1391) had attempted the conversion of the Sámi on the shores of Lake Onega in Karelia, who fell within the sphere of influence of Novgorod.[22] It is possible that the Sámi came into contact with Christianity through their participation in seasonal fisheries alongside Norwegians.[23] Siv Rasmussen has argued that the Sámi met the criteria to be considered Christians in the fifteenth century, when it was sufficient to be baptised and to confess and receive communion at least once a year.[24] Whether the late medieval Sámi were generally baptised is unclear, however. In 1346 the archbishop of Uppsala baptised twenty Sámi and Karelians at Tornio,[25] but records of such conversion events are scarce.

One potential source of evidence for the prevalence of baptism (and therefore Christianisation) among the Sámi is the appearance of Christian names in taxation records. Although the earliest of these records dates from 1558, the high level of Christian names (around 70 per cent) suggests that baptism was already well entrenched in Sámi culture, perhaps as early as the fifteenth century. On the other hand, most of these Sámi also had native names, and rituals in which baptismal names were 'washed away' from a person were common in the early modern period.[26] Here as elsewhere, assimilation into

[22] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, p. 95.
[23] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', p. 270.
[24] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', p. 267.
[25] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', p. 270.
[26] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', pp. 273–4.

Christendom and formal adherence to Christianity did not equate to Christianisation, although Rasmussen rejects the simplistic view that the Sámi simply incorporated symbols from Christianity into their Indigenous religion without any meaningful religious change.[27] Instead, Rasmussen is inclined to interpret customs such as the offering of sacrifices to churches as evidence of the depth of the acculturation of Christianity into Sámi culture rather than its shallowness. Sacrificing to churches was a creative adaptation of pre-Christian Sámi tradition that put Christian rather than native sacred sites at the centre of ritual activity, and the connection between such sacrifices and the patron saints of churches suggests the custom developed before the Reformation.[28]

However, the Sámi were so diverse, and their communities so scattered, that it is difficult to generalise about their religious trajectory in the late Middle Ages. In Finnmark the Sámi seem to have absorbed elements of Catholicism, probably in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, remaining attached to the cult of the Virgin Mary, feast days, and fast days in the post-Reformation period. This attachment can scarcely be explained unless medieval missionary activities were partly successful. In Torne Lappmark, by contrast, the Sámi in the post-Reformation period seemed resistant to Christianity as a whole – but especially to Lutheranism, the faith of the Norwegians, which the Sámi had no desire to adopt.[29] While it is too simplistic to interpret post-Reformation portrayals of the Sámi as pagan as propaganda directed

[27] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', p. 272.
[28] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', pp. 280–2.
[29] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', pp. 282–3.

against a people attached to their Catholic popular religion – Sámi pre-Christian religion was a very real force in the post-Reformation period – it is highly likely that Sámi religion was syncretised and perhaps creolised with Catholicism in the late medieval period.[30] As we shall see in Chapter 3, it is always important to bear in mind the propagandistic Reformation hermeneutic of Catholicism-as-paganism when dealing with reports on unchristianised peoples.

Livonia: From 'Idolatry' to 'Superstition'

Largely as a result of the depredations of the Livonian War of the sixteenth century and subsequent conflicts, very few sources survive from late medieval Livonia. We know almost nothing of religious policy in Livonia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, beyond what can be drawn from the synodal statutes of Archbishop Henning of Riga of 1428 and 1437. Further statutes were issued by Bishop Johannes of Ösel-Wiek in 1505.[31] These statutes seem to indicate that, in the fifteenth century, Christian chapels and shrines were beginning to acquire sacred status equivalent to the pre-Christian *hiis* (a sacred rock or tree in the landscape). In 1428 Archbishop Henning bemoaned superstitious offerings at unauthorised chapels to St Anthony and other saints and ordered that any chapels erected without episcopal permission should be torn down within a year. Archaeological data confirms that offerings of coins at chapels were occurring from the late

[30] Rasmussen, 'Protracted Sámi Reformation', p. 92.
[31] Kala, 'Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands', p. 18.

fourteenth century and intensified from the mid-fifteenth century onwards.[32] This level of official concern about the chapels suggests that they had become focusses of popular religion that probably shaded into a creole religion that conflated the chapel with the traditional pre-Christian *hiis* (Plate 7).

Throughout the late medieval period Baltic Latvians and Finnic Estonians and Livs in Livonia remained neophytes, 'which meant not only being ignorant in religion, but alien, speaking different languages, having different traditions, different folklore and a different historical heritage'.[33] The status of neophyte disappeared entirely with the collapse of 'Old Livonia' in 1561 – Russia, Denmark, and Sweden, the new occupying powers, had no historical memory of neophytes and the task of imposing Protestantism was a different one from the introduction of Christianity tout court. However, Tiina Kala has argued that historians have tended to overinterpret the evidence of religious backsliding in Livonia as paganism, when in fact Catholicism did make a significant impact on the country.[34]

In his *Chronicle*, Henry of Livonia portrayed the Estonians as fearful of the God of the Christians, suggesting that they accepted the Christian God's existence but considered him evil.[35] Archaeological analysis of burials suggests that Christianity was having an impact on funeral practices by the thirteenth century, where inhumation was gradually coming to replace cremation.

[32] Valk, 'Christianisation in Estonia', pp. 572–3.
[33] Kala, 'Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands', p. 19.
[34] Kala, 'Rural Society', p. 170.
[35] Kala, 'Rural Society', p. 174.

On the other hand, in some localities, such as Siksali, the full pre-Christian tradition of cremations and burials of males with spears and axes continued into the fifteenth century.[36] In 1214/15 the Estonians received permission from Pope Innocent III to practise 'burial at their will' (*sepulturam ad eorum voluntatem*), according to their customs, although it is unclear exactly what this meant and whether it extended to cremation. In Saxony, at an earlier period, a similar concession meant that burial outside consecrated ground went unpunished, but cremation was punishable by death.[37] However, by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries grave goods had disappeared in northern and western Estonia, although the dead continued to be buried close to where they had died even if this meant burial outside a Christian cemetery, suggesting that some compromise was reached between the traditional cult of the dead and Christian belief.[38]

In 1422 Archbishop Johannes Ambundi of Riga issued synodal statutes that concerned the 'correct Christian belief' of the peasants, which in Kala's view indicated a transition from introducing Christianity to ensuring it had been accepted in the correct form.[39] Synodal statutes of 1428 complained that the peasants buried their dead in woods 'and other profane places', and that they celebrated funerals with eating and drinking and offered food to the dead. However, the statutes were lenient towards the peasants, calling for their admonishment, while clerics who had failed to teach the faith merited

[36] Valk, 'Christianization and Changes in Faith', pp. 44–5.
[37] Valk, 'Christianization and Changes in Faith', pp. 47–9.
[38] Valk, 'Christianization and Changes in Faith', p. 51.
[39] Kala, 'Rural Society', p. 184.

harsh punishment.[40] However, most of the practices that were the focus of attention for bishops in Estonia were not specifically *religious* rituals, but rather rites of burial and marriage, and the connection between the rituals surrounding these life events and people's religious allegiances is not always straightforward. As Kala notes, 'following pagan habits did not automatically mean that Christian habits were not followed at the same time' and there is no need to assume a binary opposition between Christianity and all pre-Christian practices.[41] From the limited sample of synodal statutes available to us from fifteenth-century Livonia, it seems that concerns about peasant religiosity, focussed on superstitions and vain observances, were not significantly different from those in other European nations.[42]

Prussia: The Distracted Church

Throughout the fifteenth century Prussia was the base of the Teutonic Order, but the Ordensstaat was also ostensibly a Christian nation in its own right under bishops whose jurisdiction extended not only to the German-speaking population but also to the nominally Christian native Prussian-speaking population. In around 1400 Prussia had only 719 parishes – which was a significantly better situation than newly converted Lithuania, but nevertheless meant that most parishes included five villages, although in the diocese of Samland (Sambia) it could be as many as fourteen. By the middle of the century there

[40] Kala, 'Rural Society', p. 185.
[41] Kala, 'Rural Society', p. 188.
[42] Kala, 'Rural Society', p. 190.

was roughly one priest for every 210 people.[43] However, the pastoral situation was graver than this when we consider that many priests were monolingual German-speakers with no capacity to preach to or communicate with Prussian-speakers. In the fifteenth century the need for bilingual clergy was beginning to receive recognition, but obtaining clergy with some knowledge of Prussian was always a problem, since clergy were seldom recruited from the converted native Baltic community.[44]

Church politics and clerical careerism were also a problem. In 1427 Bishop Jan Marienau of Culm lamented that his colleagues were more concerned with temporal rather than spiritual goods.[45] Wars and alienation of church lands by the laity sapped the income of the clergy and therefore reduced the quality of the men taking charge of the parishes.[46] Fifteenth-century Prussia had the worst of both worlds – a well-established ecclesiastical hierarchy, entrenched in its privileges (which had been in place since the thirteenth century), and a still largely unchristianised native population. Thus the Prussian church was simultaneously lacking in zeal and faced with a significant pastoral and missionary challenge.

In 1422 the Teutonic Order concluded the Treaty of Melno with Jogaila, ceding Samogitia to Jogaila and drawing a new border with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.[47] This had the result that Lithuanian-speaking territories came within the borders of the Ordensstaat: an area known

[43] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 175.
[44] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 177.
[45] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, pp. 178–9.
[46] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 179.
[47] Frost, *Oxford History of Poland–Lithuania*, p. 211.

as Lithuania Minor. In time this would have significant consequences for the development of Lithuanian culture and the Lithuanian language, but for now it meant that the Ordensstaat was faced with an even larger unchristianised population. However, there were indications in Prussia of a stricter enforcement of Christian discipline. In 1445 Grand Master Von Erlichshausen banned markets or the opening of inns during mass, on pain of confiscation of goods.[48] But there is little sign from the fifteenth century of concern about the suppression of relics of pre-Christian belief, other than an ordinance of 1408 requiring burial of the dead inside cemeteries and a prohibition on all magical practices. By the 1420s, however, the idea that public festivals might be celebrated with pagan rites had become a matter of concern, attracting a prohibition on such rites in 1427. An ordinance of 1444 made it possible to confiscate horses and vehicles from those found guilty of magic, while an ordinance of 1445 bracketed magic and paganism together: 'The Prussians must particularly rid themselves of pagan costumes as well as clothes, the worship of animals and of beer, which in Samland are called *keyse* and *mettele*.'[49]

Michael Jung, bishop of Samland 1425–42, inveighed against those who gathered in forests in honour of 'Kresze', worshipping creatures in the middle of fields, invoking demons in the household, and practising animal sacrifice secretly or openly; he prohibited abuses in the drinking of beer (presumably its use in libations). The bishop also forbade 'abominations' practised at the tombs

[48] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 181.
[49] Quoted in Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 183.

of ancestors in the forests, feasting in cemeteries, and the giving of additional names to children after baptism. He also forbade the practice of 'washing' baptism from children, imposing a fine payable in wax or corporal punishment in the form of whipping for this offence. If the Prussians really were trying to wash baptism away, this represented something different from mere ignorance of Christianity – it was a conscious and outward rejection of a Christian identity through a counter-ritual. However, Gouguenheim argues that Bishop Jung (and Henry of Livonia, who described similar practices at an earlier date) may have mistaken the use of water in saunas as a kind of 'pagan baptism'.[50]

Samogitia: Quenching Sacred Fires

The duchy of Samogitia, whose people spoke a language closely related to Lithuanian (linguists still argue whether Samogitian should be considered a dialect of Lithuanian or a language in its own right), was the westernmost and northernmost province of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In 1422 the Treaty of Melno confirmed its Lithuanian status, ending a long period of war and occupation by the Teutonic Knights in which the Samogitians had proved themselves the most hardened of all Baltic warriors. The independent-minded Samogitians, while preferring incorporation into Lithuania to rule by any other polity, periodically rebelled and constituted a thorn in the side of both the Germans and the Lithuanians – a tradition of indomitability that survived into the anti-Russian

[50] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 184.

and anti-Soviet insurgencies of more recent centuries, when the Samogitians often held out longer than anyone else. The duchy's impenetrable forests and marshland, together with a population skilled in guerrilla warfare, made it virtually impossible for the Teutonic Knights to subdue Samogitia, in spite of repeated attempts. In 1398 the Teutonic Order formally incorporated Samogitia into the Ordensstaat, in an effort to make the separation of Samogitia from Lithuania seemingly irreversible.[51]

Even after Jogaila's victory at Grunwald in 1410, the Teutonic Order claimed the right to rule Samogitia and therefore refuted Jogaila's right to bring Christianity to the Samogitians as he had brought it to the Lithuanians – with the ironic result that an order of crusaders founded for the propagation of the Christian faith was effectively preventing the conversion of the region. In 1414, the issue of the rights of the Teutonic Knights and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania over Samogitia came before the Council of Constance, the ecumenical council that ended the Papal Schism. While the knights claimed that the Lithuanians were not truly Christians and accused the Poles of abetting paganism, the rector of the University of Kraków, Paweł Włodkowic (c. 1370–1435, also known as Paulus Vladimiri) advanced a novel concept of *ius gentium* ('the right of peoples' or 'the right of pagans') in his *Tractatus de potestate papae et imperatoris respectu infidelium* ('Treatise on the power of the pope and emperor in respect of infidels').

While Jogaila and Vytautas had provided the military strength for Poland–Lithuania to overcome its

[51] Pluskowski and Valk, 'Conquest and Europeanisation', pp. 586–7.

enemies, Włodkowic provided the intellectual heft to bring the Northern Crusades to an end at long last – even if the peoples of Jogaila's dominions were not yet Christianised. Defending the existence of unchristianised people, and their right to be free of warfare from crusaders, thus became central to the survival of the new polity in east-central Europe. Włodkowic declared that 'it is not permitted to deprive the infidels of their dominion, their possessions, or their jurisdiction, for they possess the same sinlessly from the hands of God, their Creator'.[52] He argued that 'all persons, whether faithful or infidels, are sheep of Christ, by virtue of their creation, even if they are not of the sheepfold of Christ'.[53] However, Włodkowic went even further than this and identified the Teutonic Knights as being in grave error:

> it is an error, completely intolerable, any way one looks at it, that Christians should gather there to do war against the infidels solely because they are infidels, or because it is said that their goal is the spreading of the Christian Faith, for under the colour of piety impieties are not to be committed.[54]

While Włodkowic conceded that the Spanish Reconquista was lawful because the lands occupied by Muslims in Iberia had once been Christian, this was not the case in Samogitia, where the land had never been under Christian sovereignty and therefore belonged directly to the Samogitians from God their creator. Włodkowic drew skilfully on precedents in Christian theology to undermine the basis of the Northern Crusades, which

[52] Włodkowic, *Writings*, pp. 123–4. [53] Włodkowic, *Writings*, p. 127.
[54] Włodkowic, *Writings*, p. 143.

had always been shaky at best; but in doing so he also laid the foundation for a wholly new approach to unchristianised peoples based on mutual respect and freedom of consent.

Jogaila could not advance a territorial case of the usual kind for Lithuania's dominion over Samogitia, because the Teutonic Order's claims on Samogitia predated Lithuania's (and Jogaila's) conversion and, traditionally, the papacy respected only the territorial claims of Christian rulers. It was necessary, therefore, for Włodkowic to advance a novel case for the right of pagans to determine their own political destiny on the basis of natural law and their natural rights as rational creatures created by God.[55] In response, the Order's leading propagandist, John Falkenberg, denounced Jogaila and Vytautas as 'pseudo-Christians' and advocated their deposition, declaring that Włodkowic 'should be considered an advocate of pagans and heretics rather than a loyal and true Christian'.[56] For Falkenberg, pagans were not protected by natural law but were violators of it, since they were guilty of unnatural idolatry, and their predestination to damnation meant that Christians not only had a right but also a duty to extirpate them. Włodkowic, replying in 1417, formulated a contrary argument that it was wrong to convert people to the Christian faith by force – a position with a long pedigree in Catholic canon law.[57]

Falkenberg and Włodkowic's dispute brought to a head theological issues that had existed since the

[55] Graff, 'Servants of the Devil', p. 147.
[56] Graff, 'Servants of the Devil', pp. 147–8.
[57] Graff, 'Servants of the Devil', pp. 148–50. For Włodkowic's reply to Falkenberg see *Writings*, pp. 303–26.

beginning of the Northern Crusades. These crusades had always been controversial; they could not be justified as just wars for the liberation of holy sites or the protection of pilgrims, like the crusades in the Holy Land. Was converting pagans to Christianity the same thing as subjugating them politically to Christendom? What if that subjugation did not result in conversion – and even alienated pagans from the Christian faith? Did treating neophytes as second-class Christians undermine the integrity of the Christian faith? Why did crusading orders need or merit temporal control over large territories, if they were supposedly ascetic orders of monastic warriors? And, once conversion had taken place, what purpose did a military and crusading order serve? These (and more) were all troubling questions that went largely unaddressed during the Baltic Crusades – but the Polish–Lithuanian victory at Grunwald forced the question, confronting the Teutonic Order with an existential crisis. Paweł Włodkowic, in turn, was advancing arguments about natural rights whose long-term consequences he could hardly have understood, but which eventually paved the way for the modern world of human rights and international law.

However, in order to make his case to the papacy successfully, Jogaila also had to show that he – and not the Teutonic Order – was the one genuinely committed to bringing Christianity to the Samogitians, and therefore on St Martin's Day (11 November) 1413 he led a royal flotilla of boats down the River Nemunas from Kaunas to the confluence of the Nemunas and Dubysa. Jogaila then travelled along the Dubysa deep into Samogitian territory. The conversion of Samogitia was more challenging

than the conversion of Lithuania, not only because the Samogitians had historically resisted the imposition of Christianity, but also because Samogitia had no towns – there was no capital like Vilnius in which a set-piece baptism event could take place in order to encourage the rest of the people. However, Jogaila does seem to have managed to gather together a large number of people – but the keynote of the conversion event was destruction rather than persuasion. According to the Polish historian Jan Długosz, writing in the 1480s,

> [Jogaila] then destroyed the idols and cut down the groves. And he came to the foremost god of the Samogitians – a fire they thought sacred and perpetual, which was situated on the high ridge of a hill near the River Nevėžis, and was kept going by the constant laying on of timbers by a priest of the rites. He burnt the tower in which it was placed, and dismantled and extinguished the fire. Then, by his Polish soldiers, he cut down the forests which the Samogitians worshipped as nothing less than holy, and as the habitations of their gods.[58]

According to Długosz, it was seeing Polish soldiers cutting down the sacred forests and groves without suffering retribution from the gods that impressed the Samogitians. An elder agreed to baptism, albeit not on the basis of any understanding of the Christian faith, but rather because the Christian God had proved his strength:

> On account of the fact that our gods, whose cults and rites we received from our ancestors, were destroyed by you and your soldiers, most serene king, and were defeated by the God of the Poles as if they were inert and powerless, we desert our gods

[58] *PEMB*, p. 57.

and their rites, and adhere to your God and that of the Poles as stronger.[59]

Whether or not these words put in the mouth of a pagan by Długosz were ever really spoken, they capture well the nature of the 'Christianesque' commitment of the Samogitians – a political acceptance of the need for adherence to the dominion of Christian faith, which was nevertheless not accompanied by any transformation of an essentially pre-Christian worldview. The Christian God was merely the god of the Poles, another deity among many who, apparently, had proved his superiority to the gods of their sacred forests. Indeed, before Jogaila had even left the region, the Samogitians had returned to their ancient practices, relighting their sacred fires. 'With the king returning,' Długosz's Samogitians say, 'in the meantime we can re-light a fire from the old fire; we understand that our god could not be destroyed.'[60] Jogaila had to order soldiers to bring water from the River Nevėžis to saturate the place where the fires had been relit, and it was only on a second attempt, in 1417, that Samogitia's sacred fires were finally put out. The conversion of Samogitia by the Lithuanians was a fait accompli and the Teutonic Order, beaten militarily, legally, and morally, finally ceded Samogitia formally to Lithuania by the Treaty of Melno in 1422.[61]

The extinction of the sacred fires and the resumption of Lithuanian authority marked the beginning of a new phase for Samogitian religion, rather than its end, as the missionary John-Jerome of Prague was to discover. At some point between 1422 and 1430 John-Jerome, who was then a

[59] *PEMB*, pp. 59–61. [60] *PEMB*, p. 61.
[61] Pluskowski and Valk, 'Conquest and Europeanisation', pp. 586–7.

Premonstratensian canon but later became a Camaldolese hermit, embarked on a missionary journey into Samogitia which he later recounted between 1431 and 1438 to the Italian humanist Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–1464), the future Pope Pius II. John-Jerome's testimony, mediated via Piccolomini, is especially significant because it was an eyewitness account of pre-Christian religion in Samogitia shortly after the conversion event, recorded by someone deeply curious about ethnography and the customs and religions of different cultures. By contrast, Długosz was writing seven decades after the conversion of Samogitia, never visited the region, and was focussed primarily on Polish affairs. John-Jerome found that some of the Samogitians worshipped snakes, which they kept in their houses and fed, while others worshipped fire, which they also used for the purposes of divination:

> The priests of the temple supplied material lest it should run out, and the friends of sick people consulted them about their life. They used to come to the fire at night, and in the morning there was a response for those consulting them. They said they could see the sick people casting a shadow in the sacred fire; and that when it grew hotter it displayed a sign either of life or death, and portended that someone was about to die.[62]

John-Jerome also found a group of people who worshipped a giant iron 'hammer' (perhaps an iron meteorite?) and recounted the myth they told about it:

> Asking the priests why it wanted such veneration, they replied that once, for many months, the Sun had not been seen. A most powerful king, having captured her, had shut her in prison in a

[62] *PEMB*, pp. 39–41.

very well-defended tower. The signs of the zodiac then helped the Sun, and with a huge hammer broke down the tower, and restored the liberated Sun to men. Therefore this tool which had brought back light for mortals was worthy of veneration.[63]

Finally, John-Jerome found people worshipping sacred forests and trees, and followed Jogaila's example by cutting down these trees in order to prove they were not really protected by the gods. However, it was this campaign of tree-felling that caused John-Jerome's mission to unravel, as a group of Samogitian women complained to Vytautas about the missionary:

They complained that the sacred grove had been cut down, and the house of God taken away in which they had been accustomed to beseech divine aid – and from which they had obtained rain and sunlight. They did not know where to find God, whose dwelling he would take away; there were other lesser groves in which they were accustomed to worship the gods. They also said that Jerome wanted to destroy them, who extirpated them when he introduced certain new rites in a partial manner.

They bore witness and asked, therefore, that the places of the religion of their ancestors and their ceremonies should not be taken away. And men followed the women, and asserted they were not able to bear the new cult. They said they would rather abandon their land and the household gods of their fatherland than the religion received from their ancestors.[64]

Darius Baronas has observed that what is missing from John-Jerome's account of fifteenth-century Samogitia is as important as what is present: namely, the absence of

[63] *PEMB*, p. 41. [64] *PEMB*, p. 43.

any mention of John-Jerome baptising the Samogitians.[65] The Samogitians were, then, in all likelihood baptised Christians, and the nature of John-Jerome's mission was to ensure their conformity to Christianity in the correct manner. Interpreted one way, the Samogitians as described by John-Jerome are obviously pagans, keeping snakes in their houses and lighting fires for divination. But on another interpretation, what John-Jerome described could also be folk customs rooted in pre-Christian religion, but which did not necessarily denote its survival as an active force – perhaps people kept snakes as pets out of habit and the involvement of fire in divination rites indicated that what had once been a religious rite now belonged to the realm of folk magic – which was hardly any different to practices in other long-since-Christianised nations.

It is the Samogitian women's complaint against John-Jerome made to Vytautas, however, which is most suggestive of the development of a form of creole religion in the duchy. Vytautas was a latecomer to baptism, and judging from the fact that he was baptised three times he may not have taken it particularly seriously. As one of the victors of Grunwald, Vytautas could present himself as a champion of Christendom, but his religious policy was eirenic and tolerant, permitting settlements of Tatar Muslims and Karaites at Trakai.[66] The women who complained to Vytautas about John-Jerome seem to have elided the Christian God with a Baltic deity

[65] Baronas, 'Christians in Late Pagan, and Pagans in Early Christian Lithuania', pp. 72–3.
[66] Rowell, 'Fifteenth-Century Lithuanian Catholicism', pp. 86–7.

(perhaps Dievas) whom they worshipped in a sacred oak tree. Their claim that the tree was a 'house of God' was not without reason – after all, there were virtually no churches in Samogitia – and it was not altogether absurd for the women to claim they were engaging in sincere worship of the deity as best they knew how. We know Jogaila and Vytautas were willing to contemplate other pragmatic religious compromises with paganism; for example, when they wrote to Pope Martin V in 1428 requesting a special dispensation for Samogitians who, when pagans, had married within the forbidden degrees of affinity.[67]

Overall, it is rather more likely that Vytautas acted as he did towards John-Jerome for pragmatic considerations and out of concern for the disorder potentially stirred up by a roving missionary, than out of a theological conviction that pagan beliefs deserved toleration. The Samogitians' thorough conversion to Christianity took a low priority next to their incorporation into Christendom through submission to Christian authority and to Vytautas himself; what they actually believed was less important. This was a pattern that would continue in Lithuanian history; the country's unchristianised people were a low priority, because they presented no political or cultural threat and unlike in Livonia they did not even represent a cultural other – since the rulers and nobility were ethnic Lithuanians too (albeit speaking Polish) with the same religious heritage.

On the other hand, pre-Christian religion seems to have retained some political significance in Samogitia

[67] *BRMR*, pp. 45–6.

later than anywhere else, into the 1440s. In 1441 a man named Daumantas was elected elder of Samogitia and rejected the Christianisation of the duchy, rebelling against Grand Duke Casimir IV.[68] The defeat of Daumantas's rebellion marked the end of pagan political unrest, but the diocese of Samogitia, established in 1417, remained rudimentary. It received an endowment of lands from Vytautas in 1421, but the canons of the cathedral in Medininkai (Varniai) were unable to live in the diocese owing to the poverty of their prebends. No archdeacon was appointed in the diocese until 1527, with no suffragan bishop assisting the bishop with the task of visitations and confirmations until 1625, and the size of parishes was vast.[69] Mangirdas Bumblauskas argued that three criteria determined the transition in Samogitia from the conversion period to the era of 'internal Christianisation', when people began individually identifying with the Christian faith. These were the refusal of sacrifices to the gods, the baptism of all adults, and the formation of a functional network of parishes. Another way to view this change is as a transition from the designation of popular religious practices as *idolatria* (pagan worship) to their designation as *superstitio* (the persistence of unacceptable religious and magical practices among Christians) in episcopal visitations and synodal statutes. It seems very unlikely that all of Bumblauskas's criteria were met in Samogitia by 1500, judging from later missionary reports on the region, and Bumblauskas considered that Samogitia, in

[68] Frost, *Oxford History of Poland–Lithuania*, p. 299.
[69] *Relationes*, pp. 223–4.

common with Sápmi, remained in a state of *idolatria* in the fifteenth century.[70]

Lithuania: The Church's Youngest Daughter

The question of how rapidly Lithuania adopted Christianity after the conversion event of 1387 (leaving aside the province of Samogitia as a special case of late conversion) is a perennial one in Lithuanian historiography. The diocese of Vilnius was the largest in late medieval and early modern Europe;[71] in the fifteenth century it covered the entirety of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania apart from Samogitia (which was its own diocese). There were no archdeacons until 1435 and no suffragan bishops until 1512.[72] The majority of the Grand Duchy's population, as we have seen, were 'Ruthenians', East Slavic-speaking Orthodox Christians, and came under the authority of their own bishops of the Greek rite. The conversion of the ethnic Lithuanians to Catholicism had the effect of creating a tripartite religious division in the nation between Orthodox Christians, Catholics, and unchristianised Lithuanians – or quintipartite if we consider the communities of Jews and Muslim Tatars as well. A document written for Grand Duke Vytautas in 1418 distinguished between *schismatici* (schismatics, that is, Orthodox), *infideles* (infidels, meaning Jews and Muslims), and *gentiles* (pagans).[73] The infidel/pagan distinction was an important one, because while it was unlikely Jews and

[70] Bumblauskas, 'Žemaitijos virsmo', p. 129.
[71] Kamuntavičienė, 'Religious Faiths', p. 159.
[72] *Relationes*, pp. 4–5.
[73] *BRMR*, p. 44.

Muslims would be converted to Catholicism, pagans were potential converts waiting to be claimed.

While all ethnic Lithuanians within the Grand Duchy were, at least in theory or in potentiality, Latin rite Catholics after the conversion event of 1387, the adoption of Catholicism went hand in hand with polonisation (at least for the nobility). Although it took decades for the Lithuanian nobility to adopt the Polish language, from an early date, members of the Lithuanian elite were studying at the University of Kraków,[74] and most of the early Catholic clergy in Lithuania were almost certainly Poles, since the diocese of Vilnius came under the authority of the archbishop of Gniezno. Polonisation, like Christianisation, is a contentious issue in Lithuanian historiography, with some equating it to a kind of cultural colonisation – with the implication that late medieval Catholicism was something alien to Lithuanians, a foreign imposition in which they had little investment. For others, the culture of Polish-speaking Lithuanians must be distinguished from Polish culture in Poland itself, and what was fashioned in Lithuania was a genuine Polish-language 'Lithuanianness' rather than the subordination of Lithuanians to Polish ways.[75] Polish-speaking Lithuanians were not necessarily any more Polish than English-speaking Scots are English. S. C. Rowell and Darius Baronas have questioned the traditional picture of fifteenth-century Lithuania as still largely pagan, with

[74] Frost, *Oxford History of Poland–Lithuania*, p. 318.

[75] On the issue of polonisation see Lubamersky, 'National Self-Perception', pp. 5–18.

Baronas arguing that Lithuania was more Christian than traditionally thought.[76]

In the view of Rowell and Baronas, 'pagan Lithuania' was primarily a rhetorical topos useful for establishing Jogaila's credentials as a Christian monarch; if Lithuania was portrayed as completely pagan, it brought more glory to Jogaila for converting the nation.[77] Rowell has emphasised the good condition of Catholicism in fifteenth-century Lithuania, a country where Christianity had already made considerable inroads by the time of its official conversion in 1387.[78] The rhetoric of conversion pulled in two separate directions: on the one hand, portraying Christianisation as successful brought glory to God and to the Jagiellonians; on the other, portraying paganism as an ever-present recrudescent threat helped support and motivate continuing efforts to Christianise the nation. However, there seems little doubt that a 'pristine' Baltic pagan religion no longer existed in fifteenth-century Lithuania, and Baronas argued that many Lithuanians followed instead a syncretistic faith based partly on badly understood and half-assimilated Christianity.[79]

As we have seen, however, conceptualising popular religion as 'syncretistic' implies a process of more-or-less reluctant compromise. Reconceptualising Lithuanian popular religion after the 1387 conversion event as creolised rather than syncretistic allows us to view it as a

[76] Baronas, 'Christians in Late Pagan, and Pagans in Early Christian Lithuania', pp. 51–81.
[77] Baronas and Rowell, *Conversion of Lithuania*, pp. 266–76.
[78] Rowell, 'Fifteenth-Century Lithuanian Catholicism', pp. 86–106.
[79] Baronas, 'Christians in Late Pagan, and Pagans in Early Christian Lithuania', pp. 72–3.

creative religious response to contact with Christianity, rather than a kind of Christianity *manqué*. The evidence of archaeology suggests that popular burial practices were almost wholly unaffected by Christianisation; between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries men and women continued to be buried fully clothed and with grave goods in traditional pre-Christian cemetery sites.[80] But Lithuanian religion was also not free from outside influence; Vytautas Tumėnas has argued that a now lost bronze figure of a male deity, apparently holding a thunderbolt, that was discovered at Kernavė in the nineteenth century was a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century candleholder depicting Jupiter, perhaps made in Germany, which may have been worshipped as an image of the Lithuanian thunder god Perkūnas.[81]

Just as Piccolomini had been fascinated by John-Jerome's account of his missionary journey to Samogitia, so another Italian humanist, Filippo Buonaccorsi, was fascinated by the religion of the Lithuanians. Buonaccorsi's curiosity had a precedent in none other than Petrarch himself – often considered the precursor of Renaissance humanism – who was intrigued by the way the Lithuanians sealed a treaty with the Hungarians in 1351. Grand Duke Kęstutis slaughtered an ox, cut off its head, and walked three times through the blood between the animal's body and severed head while pronouncing a ritual formula. Rather than expressing horror at this behaviour as a barbaric pagan rite, Petrarch used the incident to elucidate a passage of Virgil's *Aeneid* in which the Roman

[80] Urbanavičienė, 'Survivals of Paganism', p. 131.
[81] Tumėnas, 'Kernavės "Perkūno" semantikos vietinis', pp. 23–43.

poet states that Romulus and Remus 'sealed their treaties with a hewn sow' (*caesa iungebant foedera porca*, *Aeneid* 8, line 641).[82] The idea that the Lithuanians were stray Romans had already been mooted by Długosz,[83] and the possibility that Lithuanian serpent-worship, in particular, was somehow connected with the cult of the healing god Aesculapius seems to have fascinated Renaissance humanists.

Writing around 1480 in his life of Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki (who had been serving as Jogaila's secretary at the time of the battle of Grunwald and supposedly saved the king's life in the heat of battle), Buonaccorsi digressed to describe Lithuanian serpent-worship in a tour de force of ethnographic commentary:

We find that they worshipped groves, stones, deserted places, lakes and different animals – but before all others they worshipped snakes, which in their language they call Gyvatės (a religion I would not have believed they would dare to taint their souls with). For the Phoenicians, the most skilful in ancient theology, thought that snakes were the most spiritual, the fieriest and the most divine in nature; and thought other animals to be of a quite a coarse and earthly substance. This was because they were borne by spirit alone with marvellous speed, without any support of legs and feet – and then, it is made almost immortal by nature (unless force carries it off somewhere), since it sloughs off dotage and old age – as if reborn from itself. The Persians, too, sacrificed to snakes as if gods, and the Egyptians connected a snake to an image of the world, signifying the spirit which they thought animated and moved the world and the other things within it. Besides, a snake coiled in a spiral

[82] Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, p. 145 n.128.
[83] *PEMB*, pp. 47–9.

was used in the sacrifices of the Greeks. And Pherecydes of Syros wrote a book about the god Ophion, who we can call a snake. Finally, the Romans did not refrain from the worship of snakes, and of course worshipped Aesculapius in the form of a snake. Therefore (although it should now be set forth), it ought to be told how the worship of snakes reached the Lithuanians, if they were in that same superstition which we know assailed so many of the wisest nations.[84]

As far as Buonaccorsi was concerned, snake-worship did not make the Lithuanians special, because it did not link them uniquely to the Romans. It was culturally interesting nonetheless, and as we shall see in Chapter 3, sixteenth-century Lithuanians were eager to see themselves and their ancient religion as Roman. However, when Bishop Albertus Tabor of Vilnius denounced the Lithuanian nobility in 1499 'who believe in divinations and enchantments … [and] retain and succour soothsayers, enchanters, diviners, sacrilegious prophets, and others occupied in vain arts of this kind at their courts',[85] there is no reason to suppose that these forbidden practices took a specifically *pagan* form just because they were happening in Lithuania.[86] The proliferation of courtly magic was a problem for the church throughout late medieval Europe.[87] Pre-Christian religion was undoubtedly persisting in fifteenth-century Lithuania, but there is little evidence of official concern about it. Instead, the church sought to redirect popular practices in a more acceptable direction, and thus the cult of the dead manifested itself

[84] *PEMB*, p. 65. [85] *BRMR*, pp. 51–2.
[86] Quoted in Rowell, 'Fifteenth-Century Lithuanian Catholicism', p. 87.
[87] See, for instance, Carey, *Courting Disaster*; Young, *Magic as a Political Crime*.

through the endowment of altars in churches in honour of the dead and the foundation of commemorative fraternities.[88] Similarly, Rowell has suggested that the Lithuanian nobility's interest in obtaining indults to control popular cults might reflect their historic role in controlling pagan cults.[89]

Muscovy Ascending: The Unchristianised East

As we saw in Chapter 1, the missionary Stepan of Perm brought Orthodox Christianity to the Finno-Ugric Komis in the late fourteenth century in an unprecedented instance of Christianisation preceding colonisation by Novgorod or Muscovy.[90] Indeed, it was to be a pattern never repeated thereafter, although sporadic conversions to Orthodoxy among the Karelians and Sámi can be found in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[91] However, in spite of Stepan's success the dukes of Great Perm showed no sign of wanting to convert to Christianity until 1460, when the growing presence of Muscovite forces in the region led the current duke to seek baptism and take the Christian name Mikhail. In 1471 the Republic of Novgorod, which had traditionally claimed a largely symbolic overlordship of Great Perm, gave up its claim and Moscow moved in. Ivan III of Muscovy defeated Duke Mikhail at Iskorsk and captured Cherdyn in 1472, permitting Mikhail to remain in place as a vassal ruler. However, in 1505 the Muscovites replaced Mikhail's son

[88] Rowell, 'Fifteenth-Century Lithuanian Catholicism', p. 90.
[89] Rowell, 'Fifteenth-Century Lithuanian Catholicism', p. 103.
[90] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 51–2.
[91] Khodarkovsky, 'Conversion of Non-Christians', p. 120.

with a Muscovite governor, bringing any residual Komi statehood to an end – even if the tsars continued to claim the title 'Duke of Perm' among their many appellations.[92]

The extent to which the conversion of the Komis was a harbinger of Muscovite colonisation is open to debate; there can be no doubt that conversion brought the Komis culturally closer to Muscovy, and Stepan's own allegiance to Muscovy rather than Novgorod is surely significant. While Novgorod showed little interest in missionary activity, the Grand Princes of Muscovy took the view that religious and territorial expansion went hand in hand. Nevertheless, the fairly rapid conversion of Great Perm to Christianity while the principality still retained some sort of independence made it possible for the Komis to resist Slavicisation to some extent. Stepan established the principle that the conversion of the Komis would be by choice rather than by force, at least in theory,[93] and although most subsequent Muscovite conversions of pre-Christian peoples were accompanied by violence and colonisation, the example of Great Perm held out the possibility that it did not always have to be this way.

In 1455, Mansi forces under Prince Asyka killed one of Stepan of Perm's successors as bishop of Ust-Vym who had tried to impose Christianity on the Mansis by force.[94] At around the same time, Russian Orthodox peasants began settling in Udmurt lands long before the annexation of Udmurtia by Muscovy, creating a multi-ethnic polity on the upper River Vyatka which

[92] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 300–1.
[93] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 301.
[94] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 52.

recalled the loose and fairly tolerant structure of the Republic of Novgorod and in which pre-Christian religion could continue to thrive. However, the region was formally annexed by Muscovy in 1489, and Muscovy's final absorption of the fairly tolerant Republic of Novgorod in 1478 ensured a future of forced conversion and russification, following the Muscovite tradition of autocracy,[95] even if this would not be enacted with full force until the eighteenth century. Another key event of the fifteenth century in the far east of Europe was the collapse of the Golden Horde in the Volga-Ural region in 1438, to be succeeded by the Khanate of Kazan. While nominally Muslim, Kazan – like Novgorod – was essentially unconcerned with the religion of its subjects, but it constituted Muscovy's main rival in the east.[96] As we shall see in Chapter 3, it was Muscovy's eventual defeat of Kazan that determined the fate of many of the animist peoples of the Volga-Ural region.

Fortunate Isles? Christianisation and Creole Religion in the Canary Islands

The Baltic, the far north of Scandinavia, and the Volga-Ural region were not the only places where Christian Europeans were encountering unchristianised peoples before 1492 and attempting to assimilate them into Christendom. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Canary Islands (although geographically part of Africa rather than Europe) became 'the first oceanic laboratory in

[95] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 52–3.
[96] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 54.

which to exercise the cultural and geographical colonialization that was still in its early stages of development'.[97] This style of colonisation would, in due course, be applied on the other side of the Atlantic, and therefore the history of the conversion of the Canaries is simultaneously part of the story of the Christianisation of the Old World and the Christianisation of the New. While the Canary Islands had been well known to the Carthaginians and Romans, European contact with the 'Fortunate Isles' was largely lost in late antiquity. Although there were sporadic visits by Genoese sailors it was not until 1341 that Afonso IV of Portugal sent an expedition to claim the islands for Portugal and bring back native captives. A Majorcan expedition, authorised by King James III of Majorca, followed in 1342, perhaps motivated by slave-raiding. In contrast to other territories into which the Castilians, Portuguese, and Majorcans were then expanding, the inhabitants of the Canary Islands were not Muslims but animists, apparently untouched either by Christianity or Islam. The Guanches,[98] an Indigenous people related to the Berbers of North Africa, practised an animistic (and perhaps shamanistic) religion focussed on sacred trees, mountains, and caves, as well as cult images.[99]

In 1345 the pope granted the Franco-Iberian nobleman Luis de la Cerda the title of 'Prince of Fortuna' and sovereignty over the Canary Islands, on the usual condition that he convert the inhabitants to Christianity.

[97] Soormally, *Idolatry*, p. 74.

[98] The Guanches were technically just the inhabitants of one island, Gran Canaria, but the term is traditionally extended to cover all indigenous inhabitants of the Canary Islands.

[99] Vandenbroeck, 'Capturing Nameless Energies' pp. 94–5.

However, this conquest does not seem to have been conceptualised as a crusade in the same way as the Iberian Reconquista, the Teutonic Order's efforts in the Baltic, or Sweden's expansion into Finland. Both Clement VI's bulls addressed to Luis de la Cerda, *Tue devotionis sinceritas* of 15 November 1344 and *Provenit ex tue* of 13 January 1345, which provided for indulgences for those assisting with Luis de la Cerda's expedition, described the inhabitants of the Canary Island as 'alien to the faith of Christ and the dominion of Christians' (*a Christi fide et christianorum dominio alienas*), rather than as enemies of the faith.[100] These bulls thus diverged from the usual formulas adopted in bulls authorising crusades, and the rationale for the conquest of the Canaries was not the enmity of their inhabitants towards Christianity, but rather 'that by your ministry the bounds of Christendom might be extended' (*per tuum ministerium christianitatis termini dilatentur*).[101]

Luis de la Cerda died shortly afterwards, and his expedition apparently came to nothing, but Clement VI continued to hold out hope of converting the Indigenous people of the Canaries. In May 1351 he authorised two Majorcan captains, Joan Doria and Jaume Segarra, to transport a group of Franciscan friars and Guanche converts (numbering thirty) 'to instruct the idolatrous and pagan peoples inhabiting [the islands] in the Catholic faith and honest customs',[102] with the intent that the converts would interpret for the friars. Again, there is no

[100] Almeida et al. (eds.), *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. 1, p. 209 (no. 89), pp. 228–9 (no. 95).
[101] Almeida et al. (eds.), *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. 1, p. 210 (no. 89).
[102] Almeida et al. (eds.), *Monumenta Henricina*, vol. 1, p. 238 (no. 101).

evidence of the success of this mission, but the language of papal bulls continued to be compassionate rather than hostile towards the Canarians. When Portuguese sailors supposedly discovered an idol inside a shrine on a fleeting visit to the Canaries in 1341, they responded with curiosity rather than hostility, and brought it back to Lisbon.[103] Clearly, this sympathetic hermeneutic would not be applied to Muslims subject to conquest by Iberian Christians, since the imperative of anti-Muslim crusade was to prove Islam false and Christianity true.

In Mina Soormally's view, 'the conquest of these islands put in plain view the issue of confrontation with other cultures',[104] and it occurred at a time when the Iberian kingdoms had honed a policy of suppressing other cultures and religions in the Reconquista of the Iberian peninsula itself: 'it was acceptable and almost expected to disdain other forms of living, other civilizations, and to exercise a moral and cultural intolerance that had been learned in a Spain obsessed with the *limpieza de sangre*[105] and the inquisitorial way of belonging'.[106] Soormally has argued that, in the fifteenth century, the desire to convert the 'stubborn' Guanches became the primary motivation for efforts to gain control of the Canaries.[107] The eighteenth-century historian José de Viera y Clavijo claimed that when the French adventurer Gadifer de la Salle arrived on Gran

[103] Bontier and Le Verrier (eds.), *The Canarian*, p. vi.
[104] Soormally, *Idolatry*, p. 72.
[105] 'Purity of blood', the Spanish Inquisition's persecution of forcibly converted Jews and Muslims (and their descendants) as potential heretics.
[106] Soormally, *Idolatry*, p. 73. [107] Soormally, *Idolatry*, p. 74.

Canaria in around 1404 he discovered the written 'testimony' of one of a group of thirteen Christians supposedly martyred by the Guanches[108] – although even if it is true that De la Salle made such a claim, it might well have been calculated to justify the harsher treatment of the Indigenous people under their new overlords.

Between 1402 and 1418 the French adventurers Jean de Béthencourt and Gadifer de la Salle carried out a more thorough and brutal conquest of the islands than any attempted before, although it took an official campaign by the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella between 1478 and 1496 to finally annexe Gran Canaria, La Palma, and Tenerife for the kingdom of Castile. The 'seigneurial' and 'royal' conquests of the Canary Islands were characterised by mass abductions of the Guanches into slavery, although some were later released on appealing to the king of Castile.[109] Nevertheless, a precedent in Spanish treatment of Indigenous peoples had been established.

Religious persecution does not, however, seem to have played a major role in the conquest, perhaps because it was not very difficult for the Guanches to reconcile themselves to Christianity. Paul Vandenbroeck has argued that Guanche belief in a masculine god or force, 'he who sustains heaven and earth', who is in turn sustained by a feminine principle, made it fairly easy to 'redirect' Guanche belief towards Christianity.[110] For Vandenbroeck, the 'syncretism' of Guanche with Christian belief is found in

[108] Viera y Clavijo, *Noticias* (1772), p. 276.
[109] Soormally, *Idolatry*, p. 77.
[110] Vandenbroeck, 'Capturing Nameless Energies', p. 119.

the nature of the cult of the Virgin Mary in the islands, who exists in seven 'emanations' – the seven Virgins who are the patron saints of the principal islands of the archipelago.[111] Larisa Pérez Flores, however, saw post-conquest Canarian popular religion as belonging to the continuum of creole religions which extend into the Caribbean.[112] If the Guanches were indeed animists, the very concept of religion may have been entirely new to them – in which case they might not have perceived Christianity as a rival to their existing belief systems, or as displacing them, but as an additional set of ritual requirements imposed by the conquerors.

The story of the Virgin of Candelaria (Plate 8), an image of the Virgin holding a green candle that supposedly washed ashore in 1392 – ten years before Béthencourt's invasion – became, in Soormally's view, a way of colonising the past of the Indigenous peoples of the Canaries, as well as their present and future:[113] 'Part of the scheme to facilitate the conversion of the Canary Islands was slipped into their own past.'[114] Vandenbroeck adopts a more positive interpretation, viewing the legends that cult images already existed before the Iberian conquest as 'a bridge … to the indigenous population' that allowed them to make sense of the Christian faith. The idea of 'found' holy images had a long pedigree in the Mediterranean world – the Black Virgin venerated at Boulogne-sur-Mer in France, for example, was said to have washed up from the sea in

[111] Vandenbroeck, 'Capturing Nameless Energies', pp. 93–4.
[112] Flores, 'Islas, migración y criollización', p. 6.
[113] Soormally, *Idolatry*, p. 73. [114] Soormally, *Idolatry*, p. 75.

the seventh century.[115] But Tenerife's 'found cult' also anticipated the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico in 1531, which allowed the Indigenous people of Mexico to claim a direct connection with the Virgin Mary herself and thus empowered Mexican Catholicism to develop beyond a mere colonial imposition of the Spanish conquerors.

Vandenbroeck argues that the cults of the seven patron Virgins of the Canary Islands may also retain traces of animistic belief, such as the 'tree Virgin' or Virgin of the Pines (Virgen del Pino) and those cults associated with water and cliffs. The Virgins of the Canary Islands are 'the transmission of an indigenous female power, which testifies to an original animist worldview' and their cult sites constitute spiritual 'power centres' in the landscape.[116] On the other hand, the absence of any native saints in a land without a Christian history arguably obliged the inhabitants of the Canary Islands to seize upon the almost infinitely versatile cult of the Virgin Mary in order to express a devotional identity, while the idea of pilgrimage centres as focusses of spiritual power is not a distinctively animistic belief, so perhaps we should exercise some caution in reading too much into these cults. Nevertheless, it is clear that a process of 'indigenisation' of Catholicism occurred, where Canarian popular Catholicism took its own trajectory.

Whether or not we should interpret the cults of the Virgin in the Canary Islands as animistic in origin, the theme of historical back-projection in the cults of sacred

[115] Begg, *Cult of the Black Virgin*, p. 92.
[116] Vandenbroeck, 'Capturing Nameless Energies', pp. 117–18.

images was one aspect of the application of a particular hermeneutic of paganism to encounters with the Guanches – namely, the conception of pagans blindly worshipping an 'unknown God' who turns out to be the true God after all (or, in this case, his mother Mary). The *locus classicus* of this hermeneutic is found in the New Testament itself, when Paul encounters an altar dedicated 'to the unknown god' on his way to the Areopagus of Athens in Acts 17, and declares 'Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you' (Acts 17:23). Another medieval story that drew on a similar theme was that of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, supposedly founded by the Emperor Augustus after the Sibyl instructed him (shortly after the birth of Jesus) to build there an altar to the 'Son of God'.[117] Writing before 1594, the friar Alonso de Espinosa was clear that the Indigenous peoples of the Canaries had been worshipping the true God without knowing it:

> Although they knew of God, and called Him by various names and appellations, as *Achahurahan*, *Achahucanac*, *Achguavaxerax*, which words mean the great, the sublime, He who sustains all things, yet they had no rites and ceremonies, nor words with which they might venerate him.[118]

Espinosa recounted how the arrival of the image of the Virgin of Candelaria in Tenerife

> began to make them ready to receive the truth, disposing their hearts so that, little by little, they should understand the benefit

[117] On the Aracoeli legend see Noreen, 'The High Altar of Santa Maria in Aracoeli', pp. 99–128.

[118] Alonso de Espinosa, *Guanches of Tenerife*, p. 29.

they received in possessing her. For she made peace between God and man, and confirmed it by her presence among those pagan kings.[119]

Acceptance of the tale of the Virgin of Candelaria may have been assisted by an earlier legend that the Canarians had in fact been converted in the reign of Justinian by an Irish monk named Blandanus, who successfully resurrected a giant.[120] Espinosa speculated that the custom of a woman pouring water on a baby's head shortly after birth may have survived from the time of the preaching of Blandanus and his assistant Maclonus, although its original significance had long since been forgotten.[121] Indeed, Espinosa was eager to portray the Canarians neither as pagans nor as the descendants of once-converted apostates, but as human beings in their natural state – practising a kind of ignorant, Noahic monotheism: 'the natives of this island … were uncontaminated Gentiles, without rites, sacrificial ceremonies, or worship of fictitious gods, or intercourse with devils like other nations'.[122] Espinosa's response to Guanche religion is a reminder that, in Catholic tradition, pagan polytheism was considered an *unnatural* perversion of the natural human instinct to worship God, planted in the human heart by the creator. Polytheistic worship arose by the direct intervention of demons, who deceived naïve human beings into worshipping them.[123] This is one reason why 'gentiles' and 'pagans', although usually the same thing, were not

[119] Alonso de Espinosa, *Guanches of Tenerife*, p. 55.
[120] Alonso de Espinosa, *Guanches of Tenerife*, pp. 28–9.
[121] Alonso de Espinosa, *Guanches of Tenerife*, p. 31.
[122] Alonso de Espinosa, *Guanches of Tenerife*, p. 41.
[123] Young, *Twilight of the Godlings*, p. 43.

always the same – the possibility existed that there might be 'gentile' peoples in a Noahic state of innocence, rightly worshipping the one true God, but with no knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. A similar belief might have justified Vytautas's decision to permit the Samogitians to continue worshipping at oak trees in the 1420s.

Soormally interprets Espinosa as portraying the Canarians as wholly passive, 'a blank slate ready to be Christianized', in order to justify Spanish colonisation and Christianisation as benign.[124] There may be truth in this, but other interpretations are also possible. By 1594 the Guanches had been absorbed into Spanish society on the islands; it is possible that Espinosa's presentation reflected the fact that the recently Christianised Canarians (like the recently Christianised Lithuanians in the same period; see Chapter 3) sought to place the most positive interpretation on their pre-Christian past. Furthermore, Espinosa's surprisingly positive response to Guanche religion could be accounted for by the problem of responding to animism, discussed in the Introduction, when missionaries and churchman were trained on the Bible and Classical literature and therefore expected to find recognisably polytheistic cults. It seems the baptism of the Canarians took place fairly rapidly; an episcopal visitation of Tenerife in 1458, the last island to be conquered by the Spanish, indicated that there were already many baptised persons,[125] and the geographically contained nature of the islands meant that cultural assimilation was rapid. However, the Christianisation of the

[124] Soormally, *Idolatry*, p. 76.
[125] Gaspar and Vallejo, 'El primer contacto', p. 25.

Canaries may have been assisted by the fairly sympathetic attitude adopted by Christians towards Canarian religion, which contrasted both with the church's response to Baltic paganism and Spanish responses to Islam and Judaism.

Conclusion

The fifteenth century was the first time in history when pre-Christian religions no longer posed any threat to European Christendom and almost all of northern and eastern Europe – for the time being at least – fell under the dominion of Christian rulers. Ottoman Islam was on the march, of course, and confrontation with the religions of the New World was not far away, but Christianity in Europe was no longer engaged in an existential struggle with pre-Christian religion, with Islam now its only rival. While there were active missionary (and indeed military) endeavours such as the conversion of Samogitia and the conquest of the Canary Islands, the keynote of the pre-1492 era was the normalisation of hitherto unchristianised peoples within Christendom – their assimilation into the Christian community of the nation, into the parish system, and into accepted ways of Christian piety. However, whereas such assimilation was driven in Fennoscandia, Russia, and the Canary Islands by familiar ideas of the inferiority of unchristianised peoples, Poland–Lithuania's approach to unchristianised peoples was underpinned – uniquely in Christendom – by an ideological commitment to their right to exist.

In practice, assimilation of unchristianised peoples was by no means straightforward – no parish system existed

in Sápmi, whatever successes there might have been in the conversion of the Sámi to Catholicism, and the diocesan and parochial structures of Lithuania and Samogitia were barely functional. The conversion of Lithuania and Samogitia strained the missionary and pastoral resources of a church in its infancy, and it was in the interests of the clergy to downplay the prevalence of pre-Christian religion rather than to emphasise it. While some Sámi people in northern Fennoscandia were increasingly coming into contact with Latin and Orthodox Christianity, the logistical challenge of systematically converting a society of nomadic hunters and reindeer-herders was probably beyond the resources of the fifteenth-century church. In the self-contained Canary Islands, by contrast, conversion proceeded rapidly, unhampered by the geographical vastness of Sápmi, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, or the Volga-Ural steppes.

At the same time, complacency had set in in Livonia and Prussia, territories where Christian institutions were by now well established – even if the extent to which Christianity itself had made progress among the native inhabitants was open to question. The status of 'neophytes' given to Prussians, Latvians, Livs, and Estonians rendered them 'second-class Christians' – on one level a lamentable situation, but also one that arguably institutionalised and even normalised creole religion within these communities. While there were periodic outbreaks of zeal among churchmen, and our sources for this period in Prussia and Livonia are meagre, the evidence of archaeology suggests that pre-Christian traditions were tolerated among the native peoples in a way that they would not have been among Germans. Neophytes

were often accepted, even after generations of baptism, as people whose Christian faith was still in its infancy and therefore could not be held to the same standards as German-speakers. For newly Christian Lithuania, meanwhile, the challenge was not so much to purge paganism from the body politic – for pagans had already been sidelined – but to turn a country hitherto dominated by Orthodox Ruthenians, which presented itself as the heir of Kyivan Rus',[126] into a member of Latin rite Christendom. Next to this task of geopolitical and cultural realignment, the continued existence of pagans in the countryside was a marginal issue.

However, the bitter ideological conflict between Poland–Lithuania and the Teutonic Knights, with both sides accusing the other of heresy on account of their treatment of pagans, offered a foretaste of what was to come in the sixteenth century, when the continued existence of unchristianised peoples in the Old World was repeatedly weaponised in the polemics of the Reformation. How Christian, then, were these newcomers to Christendom by the end of the fifteenth century? What can be said with certainty is that no one in Europe (except perhaps the Nenets people of the Arctic, and peoples close to Tatar lands like the Chuvashes) was entirely untouched by the Christian faith or ignorant of its existence. The existence of 'Christianesque' or creole religion, in which unchristianised peoples acknowledged the power of the Christian God but absorbed him into a still pagan worldview, seems likely in several regions. But the glib observation, so easy to make, that ordinary people

[126] MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, p. 514.

in late medieval Livonia, Prussia, Samogitia, Lithuania, Sápmi, or Tenerife were no more 'pagan' in their attachment to various eccentric forms of popular Christian devotion than English, French, or Irish peasants misses the mark.[127] It ignores the depth of Christian history in most other European countries that these regions lacked. Popular Christianity was no less eccentric in Britain, Ireland, or France than it was at Europe's unchristianised edge – but popular religion in Britain, Ireland, or France did not combine elements of Christianity and paganism, because Christianisation ran so deep in these countries that paganism was no longer remembered. What set places like Livonia, Prussia, Samogitia, Lithuania, Sápmi, and Tenerife apart was that a cultural memory of pre-Christian religion did indeed interweave itself into popular religion, creating not just deviant or eccentric popular Christianity but, in all likelihood, genuine creole religions that were neither truly Christianity nor the pre-Christian religions that preceded it.

[127] See, for example, Rowell, 'Fifteenth-Century Lithuanian Catholicism', p. 88.

3

(Counter-)Reformation in Unchristianised Europe

The Sixteenth Century

On 5 January 1556 an English ship, the *Serchthrift*, arrived at the remote Arctic island of Vaygach, just south of Novaya Zemlya, under the command of Richard Chancelour. The island was inhabited by the Finno-Ugric-speaking Nenets people, who lived by fishing and hunting in the High Arctic tundra, and were then referred to as Samoyeds (Plate 9). Chancelour's servant, Richard Johnson, described a Nenets ritual the crew witnessed:

> first the Priest doth begin to play upon a thing like to a great sieve, with a skin on the one end like a drum: and the stick that he playeth with is about a span long, and one end is round like a ball, covered with the skin of an Hart. Also the Priest hath upon his head a thing of white like a garland, and his face is covered with a piece of a shirt of mail, with many small ribs, and teeth of fishes, and wild beasts hanging on the same mail. Then he singeth as we use here in England to halloo, whoop, or shout at hounds, and the rest of the company answer him with this … 'Igha, Igha, Igha'; and then the Priest replieth again with his voices. And they answer him with the selfsame words so many times, that in the end he becometh as it were mad, and falling down as he were dead, having nothing on him but a shirt, lying upon his back, I might perceive him to breathe. I asked them why he lay so, and they answered me, 'Now doth our God tell

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.007

him what we shall do, and whither we shall go'. And when he had lyen still a little while, they cried thus three times together: 'Oghao, Oghao, Oghao.' And as they use these three calls, he riseth with his head and lieth down again, and then he rose up and sang with like voices as he did before: and his audience answered him, 'Igha Igha, Igha.' Then he commanded them to kill five Olens or great Deere, and continued singing still, both he and they as before … Thus far of their service which I saw during the space of certain hours: but how they do worship their Idols, that I saw not: for they put up their stuff for to remove from that place where they lay. And I went to him that served the Priest, and asked him what their God said to him when he lay as dead. He answered, that his own people doth not know, neither is it for them to know: for they must do as he commanded.[1]

Johnson had witnessed what modern anthropologists would identify as a shaman's trance. It is difficult to imagine anything more alien to an inhabitant of Mary I's England. On the other hand, as a man with some level of education Richard Johnson would surely have been familiar with the arguments that had raged across England just three years earlier, about whether Catholicism was merely paganism and idolatry, under Mary I's predecessor Edward VI. As Johnson explored the High Arctic with the crew of the *Serchthrift*, encountering the 'idolatry' of the Nenets people, Smithfield Market reeked of burning human flesh as those who still dared to call Catholicism idolatry fell victim to Mary I's attempted purge of Protestants from the kingdom.

The Nenets people may well have been alien to the English, but the fear of idolatry was not. We do not know

[1] Hakluyt, *Principal Navigations*, pp. 283–5.

whether Johnson sympathised more with Queen Mary and her bishops or with the 'Gospellers' who were prepared to go to the stake for rejecting 'popish idolatry'. But questions about idolatry, paganism, and the right way to worship God were live issues of debate – sometimes with deadly consequences – in mid-Tudor England. However, the Nenets people Johnson encountered were surprisingly sophisticated; he was able to communicate with them in Russian, which they spoke fluently, and they seemed open to his curiosity and willing to answer his questions – quite different from the cannibalistic 'wild Samoyeds' the Russians had warned him about.

The Nenets people of the Russian Arctic were one among many animistic and shamanistic peoples who were feeling the impact of the expansion of Muscovy's burgeoning empire. Ivan the Terrible had declared himself 'tsar' in 1547 and Russia expanded aggressively eastwards and northwards throughout the second half of the sixteenth century. The remote Arctic regions were a particular target of expansion for the Russians for the same reason the English crew of the *Serchthrift* were there: the valuable prize of furs from Arctic animals. The fall of the nominally Muslim Khanate of Kazan to Muscovy in 1552 brought several peoples who had never embraced Islam or Christianity under the tsar's dominion, and by the 1590s there were Muscovite forts even as far north as the Nenets lands.[2] However, while Russia had no tradition of ethnographic writing, its neighbour to the west, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, was one of the great centres of the European Renaissance. In

[2] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 54.

Poland–Lithuania – and especially in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – Renaissance humanism flourished in a nation where pre-Christian religion still existed.

From the 1520s radical religious change began to sweep across large swathes of northern Europe, including several nations with unchristianised populations. In 1525 the thirty-seventh Grand Master of the Teutonic Order declared his conversion to the new Lutheran confession and transformed Prussia into a hereditary dukedom under Polish suzerainty, bringing thousands of unchristianised Old Prussians, Sudovians, Nadruvians, and Lithuanians under Protestant rule. Meanwhile in neighbouring Poland–Lithuania the Jagiellonian dynasty remained Catholic, but the Radziwiłł family who dominated the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, with its largely unchristianised Lithuanian-speaking population, adopted Calvinism; they were followed by much of the Lithuanian nobility.[3] Then, in 1527–8, Sweden and Denmark–Norway began to adopt the Lutheran Reformation, bringing the Sámi people of northern Norway, Sweden and Finland within the ambit of the Protestant world.

The Protestant confessions, with their emphasis on the preaching of the Bible in vernacular languages, literacy, personal identification with the Christian faith, and adoption of a godly Christian lifestyle – as well as submission to the religious authority of the king rather than the distant pope in Rome – intensified the process of Christianisation. And hot on the heels of the Protestant reformers came the Catholic Counter-Reformers – Catholic missionaries such as the Jesuits who were determined to reclaim northern

[3] Bem, *Calvinism in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth*, pp. 165–95.

Europe for Catholicism and make up for the shortcomings of their predecessors in converting unchristianised peoples. It is in the sixteenth century that Europe's unchristianised peoples begin to emerge from the shadows of history, but the world they emerged into was one in which they found themselves caught in the crossfire between Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox Christians at a time of intense unrest and change. Furthermore, the centrality of accusations of paganism and idolatry to Reformation polemic risked turning 'real' unchristianised peoples into pawns in a struggle between Christians that was not their own.[4] Reforming (and counter-reforming) zeal required the existence of pagans, because pagans served a polemical and rhetorical purpose – and thus missionaries sometimes over-enthusiastically interpreted deviant forms of popular religion as pre-Christian religion – rendering it important for the historian to remain on their guard against exaggerations and distortions.

The imagined 'pagans' of Reformation and Counter-Reformation rhetoric could be Catholics, Orthodox, or Protestants, according to taste. But there can be no reasonable doubt that throughout this period actual peoples at various levels of unchristianisation continued to exist. Ultimately, both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation hastened the demise of Europe's last remaining pockets of pre-Christian and creole religions, through an emphasis on better parochial organisation, preaching in the vernacular, catechesis, the encouragement of church attendance, and regular missionary activity. The numbers

[4] On the theme of paganism in Reformation polemic see Cameron, *Enchanted Europe*, pp. 208–10.

of unchristianised people in sixteenth-century Europe were low; but these communities nevertheless represented a troubling survival that caused much soul-searching among Catholics and Protestants alike.

Although the Christianisation of the New World lies beyond the scope of this book, the European rediscovery of the Americas undoubtedly played a role in developing attitudes to 'superstition' and popular religion in the Old World. Discussion of the unchristianised peoples of the Old World took place, for the first time, within the context of a truly globalised ethnographic discourse. And, as MacCulloch has noted, only the conversions of Spain, Lithuania, and the Canary Islands provided a reference point for what was occurring in the New World.[5] For the Catholic Counter-Reformers, the illicit religious practices and spiritual indifference of the peasantry in Spain, France, and Italy invited comparison with the idolatry of 'Indians' in the New World, with the seventeenth-century witch-hunter Pierre de Lancre even blaming demons evicted from the Americas and Japan for apparent outbreaks of demonic activity in France.[6] Suddenly, European Christians were confronted with vibrant and living polytheistic cultures that were not those of Greece or Rome found in books, and any similarities between popular Christian practices and these abominations shamed the Christian world. For the Spanish and Portuguese in particular, the challenge of converting the New World provided an impetus for the renewal of the church and the Christian faith independent of the need

[5] MacCulloch, *History of Christianity*, p. 697.

[6] Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, pp. 97–9; Campagne, *Strix hispánica*, pp. 37–9.

to respond to the challenge of Protestantism – and this is one reason why historians sometimes prefer the term 'Catholic Reformation' to 'Counter-Reformation', which misleadingly portrays the Catholic reform of the sixteenth century as a purely reactive response to the Protestant Reformation.

However, it was primarily in the deeply Christianised nations of the Atlantic and Mediterranean seaboards that such themes were discussed. Sweden and Poland–Lithuania would play no role in the colonisation of the Americas until the mid-seventeenth century, and the New World was therefore of less urgent interest in countries that still retained an unchristianised population of their own. Nevertheless, in 1531 Bishop Jan Dantyszek of Warmia wrote to the patriarch of the West Indies, Esteban Gabriel Merino, suggesting that Jagiellonian victories over Turks and Orthodox Christians should inspire the Spanish in their subjection of the New World to Christendom.[7] Polish intellectuals inhabited a global humanist discourse where the New World was part of the discussion, even if it did not play a major role. The peasants of Lithuania were a point of reference for the Jesuit Giovanni Botero when describing the lives of people in the Vijayanagara Empire of south India,[8] although (perhaps surprisingly), Paweł Włodkowic's ideas about the *ius gentium* articulated at the Council of Constance do not seem to have directly influenced early advocates for the rights and dignity of Indigenous peoples in the Americas such as Bartolomé de las Casas.[9] However, while Swedish

[7] *PEMB*, p. 33. [8] Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology*, p. 296.
[9] Russell, 'Paulus Vladimiri's Attack on the Just War', p. 253; Knoll, '*A Pearl of Powerful Learning*', pp. 460–1.

and Danish–Norwegian responses to the Sámi sometimes echoed the attitudes of European colonisers in the Americas, I have argued elsewhere that unchristianised people in the Baltic were generally treated as 'an unthreatening superstitious remnant' who were already a minority and only likely to dwindle in numbers and significance.[10] Furthermore, no ethnic difference existed between pagans and the Christian nobility in Lithuania and Samogitia. This hermeneutical difference limited the applicability of discourses developed in the New World to Old World pagans and vice versa.

Sápmi and the Reformation: The Taint of Witchcraft

By around 1500 the Sámi had completed the transition from a hunter-gatherer culture to one based on semi-nomadic reindeer-herding. In the early sixteenth century Sápmi was split, as it is today, between the territory of Norway (in union with Denmark from 1524), Sweden, Finland (then still part of Sweden), and Russia. The Kola Sámi underwent conversion to Russian Orthodoxy in the early sixteenth century, as the Republic of Novgorod's former sphere of influence came under the control of Moscow.[11] The Swedish Sámi were only loosely connected to the Swedish Crown before 1523.[12] In that year, King Gustav Vasa wrote a letter to Pope Hadrian VI, promising to convert the Sámi, and in 1526 a friar of Vadstena, Benedictus

[10] Young, 'Of Divels in Sarmatia Honored', p. 72.
[11] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 129.
[12] Naum, 'Between Utopia and Dystopia', p. 491.

Petri, was sent to evangelise them.[13] However, the borders of the Danish, Swedish, and Muscovite realms were by no means fixed during this era and it was often the Sámi who suffered from war. A contested border also resulted in settler immigration into Sámi areas and the contraction of the territory that could be considered culturally Sámi.[14]

One of the earliest ethnographic accounts of Sámi religion was given by the Bavarian humanist Jacob Ziegler in 1532, as part of his geographical work on Scandinavia; he reported that the Sámi 'do not follow the Christian faith; but they do not take refuge in hate against it, like the Jew, but repeatedly receive it according to the grace of the kings which is granted them'. In other words, the Sámi kept paying lip service to efforts at Christianisation without truly becoming Christians. However, Ziegler did not blame the Sámi themselves but singled out the archbishops of Uppsala and other churchmen for criticism:

> This is the state of religion among the Sámi; although [Christianity] is chosen and received and instituted by the majority, they are idolaters, and whatever living thing turns up in the morning, they take from it an omen of the outcome of the day, and worship the same for that day. They also have stone statues set up in the mountains for gods. They solemnise marriages, and take auspices in fire and sand.

Ziegler also anticipated subsequent commentary on the Sámi by describing them as magicians:

> Furthermore, their enchanters are very efficacious. They tie three magical knots, hanging from a leather thong, and when

[13] Rasmussen, 'Protracted Sámi Reformation', p. 171.
[14] Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, pp. 23–4, 37.

they untie one they provoke bearable winds; when they untie the next one, they are much more violent, and when they untie the third they make an open tempest, just as the ancients elicited thunder … They also make a short little magical spear out of lead, the size of a finger, and send it out to some remote place against those from whom they seek revenge. These people are deprived of life within three days by a rising tumour on the leg or arm, with great pain.[15]

The legend of the 'wind-knot' was already an old one at this time, appearing (as we saw in Chapter 1) in the ethnographic writings of the thirteenth-century English Franciscan friar Bartholomaeus Anglicus.[16] Although Ziegler does not condemn the Sámi for their use of magic, and makes no reference to the shamanic trances and drums that would later become a staple of ethnographers, by referencing the Sámi's supposed skill in weather magic and harmful sympathetic magic Ziegler contributed to the burgeoning legend of the Sámi as sorcerers.

Nevertheless, the Christianisation of the Sámi continued to advance. By the mid-sixteenth century the first church had been erected in the Torne lappmark, a region with solely Sámi inhabitants straddling northern Sweden and Finland: the Rounala Chapel.[17] Meanwhile, in Norway in 1512, Archbishop Erik Valkendorf reported to Pope Leo X that all Sámi living south of Vardø were Christianised. After the Lutheran Reformation in Norway and Sweden in 1536–7 efforts to reach the Sámi intensified; in Piteå, Anders Nicolai (parish priest 1566–93)

[15] Ziegler, *Quae intus continentur*, fols xcv^{r}–^{v}.
[16] Kaikonnen, 'Jacob Fellman's Introduction', p. 184.
[17] Rasmussen, 'Protracted Sámi Reformation', pp. 169–71.

preached in the Sámi language, and other clergy from the Gulf of Bothnia visited Sápmi every winter.[18] In 1587 Nicolai became responsible for the Pite and Lule Sámi.[19] By 1558, 68.7 per cent of Sámi living on the coast of Finnmark and 73.1 per cent in the southern part of Torne lappmark had Christian names, and by the end of the sixteenth century Sámi names had almost vanished from the Swedish tax registers – suggesting, in all probability, that most of the Sámi were baptised by this point.[20]

As we have seen, the Sámi's assimilation of aspects of Christianity into their culture, such as the writing of calendars on reindeer horn and the inclusion of Christian imagery on ritual drums shows that they underwent some degree of Christianisation in the late Middle Ages. But Sámi popular Catholicism was unacceptable as evidence of proper Christianisation in newly Lutheran Sweden, especially when it continued to be combined with pre-Christian Sámi religion. As Ziegler indicated, the difficulty faced by missionaries was not that the Sámi refused to attend church or undergo Christian rites, but that they could not be persuaded to give up their own traditional rites *as well*.[21] We may be looking here at the problem of animism described in the Introduction to this book; that animism is so different from Christianity, and its concerns so different, that it has the capacity to 'fly under the radar' of Christian belief. Or, put another way, the Christian and the animist are speaking such vastly different languages of belief that they simply do not vie for the same conceptual space.

[18] Rasmussen, 'Protracted Sámi Reformation', p. 172.
[19] Rasmussen, 'Protracted Sámi Reformation', p. 173.
[20] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', pp. 273–4.
[21] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', p. 266.

While Sámi animism might have been sufficiently different from Christianity for the Sámi to feel the two belief systems could co-exist alongside one another, there was a dark side to the perception of Sámi belief as something other than a rival religion. As we have seen, Sámi religion was coded from early on as a form of sorcery. Like the Virginian settler Alexander Whitaker, who wrote in 1612 that Native American priests were 'no other but such as our English witches are',[22] the Swedish ethnographer (and Catholic bishop) Olaus Magnus, writing in the 1550s, saw Sámi beliefs and practices in terms of witchcraft – an imagined inversion of all that was good, rather than the paganism of unconverted gentiles.[23] Linda Burnett has suggested that the origins of the idea of the Sámi as sorcerers can be traced to the Classical belief in Hyperboreans possessed of magical powers,[24] and it is certainly true that the mysterious far north was a persistent source of fantasies about giants, dragons, and magic. But it is just as likely that Olaus's standard hermeneutic of *interpretatio Romana* ran up against its limits when dealing with Sámi religion, which proved so unlike the cults of Greece and Rome that Olaus was forced to fall back on witchcraft in order to explain it:

Among the Bothnian men of the north are found everywhere witches and sorcerers, as if in their proper place, who by supreme skill in deceiving the eyes know how to dissemble

[22] Gaskill, *Between Two Worlds*, p. 30.

[23] On witchcraft as inversion see Clark, 'Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft', pp. 98–127.

[24] Burnett, 'Translating Swedish Colonialism', p. 145. On the witchcraft stereotype applied to Sámi people see also Mathisen, 'Hegemonic Representations', p. 21.

their own appearance or that of others in the images of various things, and indeed to obscure the sight by various deceitful forms …[25]

So central was witchcraft to Olaus's portrayal of the Sámi that he did not even bother to describe their religious beliefs, even to condemn them. Sámi magic, in Olaus's view, was rooted in their incantations – by which, of course, he meant shamanic chanting. The Sámi *noaidi*, in Olaus's view, was able not only to enter a trance himself but also to induce visions in others and alter the very appearance of reality, and he followed Jacob Ziegler in associating the Sámi with weather magic and harmful sympathetic magic at a distance (copying from Ziegler word for word the passage on the Sámi making tiny lead spears). But it was Olaus's interpretation of the *noaidi*'s trance that would prove most damaging:

Desiring to know the state of his friends or enemies in the vast extent of those lands, five hundred or a thousand miles distant from him, the Lapp or Finn expert in this matter, having given a gift of linen (that is to say, a vest or girdle), asks to have experience of where his friend or enemy now is and what he is doing. In order to do this, he enters an enclosed space (with his wife shut in there) with one companion, and pounds with a mallet a bronze frog or serpent on an anvil with the prescribed blows, turning it over continually with a murmured incantation, and falling down beside himself he seizes it and throws it, being like a dead man within a short space of time. Meanwhile, as it happens, a midge or fly or other animal is guarded carefully by the aforesaid companion, so that it should remain alive.

[25] Olaus, *Historia*, fol. 39r.

For by the power of the incantations his spirit is conducted by an evil demon and brings back distant signs (a ring or little knife) in witness of his completed task or commission. And getting up again immediately, with the same signs and other circumstances, he declares it to be his guide.[26]

Olaus's insistence that Sápmi was not only overrun by sorcerers but was, in some sense, the 'home' of black magic would have a lasting impact on the perception of northern Fennoscandia throughout Europe. Furthermore, his portrayal of the Sámi as able to know events at a distance with the assistance of animals evoked the idea of witches' familiars, while his report that Sámi sorcerers could kill at a distance tapped into the darkest fears of rulers about political magic. The German physician Caspar Peucer reinforced Olaus Magnus's portrayal of the Sámi as heathen sorcerers, noting that the Sámi 'worship even to this day wood and stones for gods'.[27] From its 1560 edition onwards, Peucer's *Commentary on the Principal Types of Divination* offered quite a detailed account of Sámi shamanism and the use of drums.[28] Nevertheless, Peucer noted that 'at this time there are fewer incantations here than before, because the king of Sweden (lest they should use them any more) forbids them most severely, and takes care (as far as possible) that they should be rightly instructed about our religion'.[29] The Sámi reputation for witchcraft extended to Muscovy, where Vasilii III reportedly sent 'as far as the wild Lapps' for sorcerers who would

[26] Olaus, *Historia*, fols 39r–v. [27] Peucer, *Commentarius*, fol. 131v.
[28] Peucer, *Commentarius*, fols 132r–133r.
[29] Peucer, *Commentarius*, fol. 133r.

help his wife to conceive the son who would become Ivan the Terrible.[30]

For commentators such as Ziegler, Olaus Magnus, and Peucer, Sámi Christianisation was highly politicised, both because it was a scandal to the rest of Europe that the kings of Sweden and Denmark–Norway had failed to stamp out Sámi religion and because Sámi sorcery posed a political risk: it could potentially be harnessed for intelligence-gathering and political assassination. When Christian IV of Denmark–Norway travelled to the Kola Peninsula in 1599 he believed himself to be under threat from Sámi sorcery,[31] rather like James VI of Scotland who, a decade earlier, had believed Scottish witches tried to drown him on a sea voyage from Denmark to Scotland.[32] However, unlike witchcraft in Scotland, accusations of Sámi sorcery were explicitly racialised. Olaus portrayed the Sámi as sorcerers *by nature*, because they belonged to the Sámi people and the far north (although, in fairness, he also attributed this to the Finns). The deadly consequences of this stereotyping will be explored in Chapter 4. For Christian IV, eager to secure the borders of his kingdom against incursions from Muscovy, the Sámi were a potentially destabilising factor whose semi-nomadic life rendered their political loyalties suspect.[33]

Attempts at Christianisation of the Sámi as Lutherans in Danish–Norwegian and Swedish territories were paralleled in the Kola Peninsula by Russian Orthodox missionary activity. In 1526 the Sámi living along Kandalaksha Bay

[30] Luehrmann, 'The Magic of Others', p. 475.
[31] Willumsen, 'The Witchcraft Trial against Anders Poulsen', p. 144.
[32] Young, *Magic as a Political Crime*, p. 182.
[33] Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, p. 24.

submitted to baptism, but it proved harder for Orthodox clergy to reach people in the interior. In the 1540s, a monk of the Solovetsky Monastery, Feodorit Kolsky, worked as a missionary at the mouth of the Kola River. Here he founded a monastery, wrote down some prayers in the Sámi language using the Cyrillic alphabet, and reputedly baptised over 2,000 Sámi over two decades. At around the same time a monk named Trifon (1495–1583) was working among the Skolt Sámi along the Pechenga River, where he founded a monastery in 1565. In Neil Kent's view, the saints adopted as patrons of various activities by Orthodox Sámi sometimes came to be blended with pre-Christian deities: St Nikolai Chudotvorec, patron of Sámi fishermen, with the Kiose-Olma, and St Evstafii Plakida, patron of reindeer-herding, with the reindeer-herding deities Luotemenyt and Rassy-aike.[34]

Karelia: Imagined Deities?

Like the Sámi, Karelian Finns were a people of the far north divided by political borders, in this case the border between Swedish-governed Finland and Muscovy. The Karelians were known for maintaining 'offering places', both in their own homes and outdoors, which might be collections of stones or trees (groves). In some cases, these sites were very ancient indeed; archaeological investigation of moss from the bottom of concave offering stones from western Finland, still in use in the early modern period, has allowed them to be dated to the Bronze Age.[35]

[34] Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, pp. 96–7.
[35] Toivo, *Faith and Magic*, p. 130.

In 1534–5 an Orthodox monk from Novgorod named Ilja went to Kexholm Karelia, with an armed escort, to destroy and burn all offering places. According to a contemporary account of Ilja's campaign,

> [The Karelians do] not care for the church of God or its rules. They do not go to church to hear the service … but the Devil has caused them to worship on their own filthy sites for trees and stones – and they sacrifice food and drink for the honour of the evil spirits. And they are all evildoing apostates, 'Chudian'[36] dice casters to their desecrated places, and their dead they put in the kurgan mounds and non-Christian burial sites in the villages with the help of the dice casters, and do not take them to the churches to be buried.[37]

In spite of the portrayal of all these activities as pagan, it is not altogether clear whether early modern Karelians held trees and stones to be sacred in and of themselves (as early modern Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians seem to have done) or whether these were simply sacred because they marked the location of an offering site. It is also not quite clear whether Karelian Finns made offerings to deities or saints at these offering sites; just because a sacred site was in use from the pre-Christian era (or even prehistory), it does not follow that it was always in use for the same purpose or that the same deities were always honoured there. As in the Baltic region, in Finland and Karelia those who cut down trees at offering places were said to be struck down with illness or disease, but this was said to be as a result of the magical protection

[36] 'Chudian' was a general term used by Russian-speakers to refer to all Finno-Ugric peoples.

[37] Quoted in Toivo, *Faith and Magic*, p. 131.

of such sites rather than punishment by specific deities – suggesting that a polytheistic understanding of the offering places had already collapsed by the sixteenth century.

Raisa Toivo has shown that claims of 'pagan' Finns and Karelians in the sixteenth century should be treated with caution. In 1553 the Lutheran pastor Mikael Agricola published a supposed list of Finnic deities still worshipped in rural areas, including Ukko and Kekri. Ukko was 'toasted' at sowing and harvest; but he may not have been a deity at all, but rather an honorific for a senior male figure in the community. Similarly, Kekri – who was allegedly worshipped around All Souls' Day – seems to have been a local name for the Christian festival commemorating the souls of the departed rather than a deity.[38] We are here in the difficult and ambiguous terrain between pre-Christian religion, 'Christianesque' creole religion, and popular Christianity. Poorly catechised Christians were sometimes unaware of the distinction between official and 'folk' saints and might personify Christian festivals as if they were themselves saints. St Ilya (Elijah) often stood in for Ukko among the Orthodox Karelians and likewise received sacrifices of cattle.[39] Furthermore, it is probable that the real target of Agricola and other Protestant Finnish translators such as Ericus Erici Sorolainen was not 'paganism' but Catholicism conceived *as* paganism.[40]

It is not clear that folk saints always operated in a manner much different from pre-Christian deities, and the Karelians who maintained offering places and buried their dead outside of consecrated ground were clearly

[38] Toivo, *Faith and Magic*, pp. 131–5.
[39] Harvilahti, 'Mythic Logic', pp. 189–90. On Ukko see *LBM*, pp. 199–200.
[40] Toivo, *Faith and Magic*, pp. 37–8.

imperfectly Christianised. However, a residual attachment to 'paganism' is not the only explanation for practices such as worship at outdoor shrines or burials in unconsecrated ground; another is the absence of effective Christian ministry and pastoral care, which compelled Finns and Karelians to practise popular Christianity in non-standard ways. And it is difficult to trust narratives of rural 'paganism', as these were often religiously motivated propaganda. As Toivo observes, a list of deities like Agricola's generated scholarly interest in its own right, regardless of its correspondence to reality, creating a textual tradition that gives the appearance of a real 'pagan' cult in early modern Finland and Karelia. Clergy were motivated to repeat, share, and offer further commentary on lists like Agricola's because to do so bolstered their own credentials as pastorally conscious clergy, aware of the need for reform and the parlous state of popular devotion in remote areas.[41]

Livonia: Land of Werewolves?

At the beginning of the sixteenth century Livonia (today's Estonia and Latvia) was still Terra Mariana, directly subject to the pope and divided between a number of different ecclesiastical lords including the Teutonic Knights, the archbishop of Riga, and the bishops of Dorpat, Courland, and Ösel-Wiek. These bishops exercised both temporal and spiritual jurisdiction over their still largely unchristianised subjects. Pre-Reformation Catholic bishops were deeply concerned about the persistence of

[41] Toivo, *Faith and Magic*, pp. 135–6.

pre-Christian religion in Estonia, even if they were not very good at stamping it out. In 1505 the bishop of Ösel-Wiek, Johannes, issued synodal statutes that drew attention to pagan practices, but condemned the negligence of the clergy rather than the 'neophytes' themselves.[42] The statutes paid particular attention to ensuring Estonians were taught the basics of the faith in the Estonian language.[43] However, by 1519 the church's attitude had hardened, judging from an instruction from the bishop of Saare-Lääne, Johannes Kyvel, which required the bishop's visitors to seek out sorcerers, witches, and heretics 'who were not true Christians but worshipped sacred, groves, stones, and trees'. The instruction also singled out worshippers of thunderstorms (perhaps a reference to the cult of the thunder god) and commanded all to be burnt as non-believers and heretics.[44] As Tiina Kala points out, however, there is no evidence such punishments were actually carried out.[45] Kyvel's instruction suggests that he thought most Estonians would be baptised and that they outwardly professed Christianity, since he accused them of not being 'true Christians'; and there was no canonical or judicial mandate to burn the unbaptised as heretics or apostates. Kyvel's juxtaposition of paganism and witchcraft also anticipated subsequent developments in the region.

In Kala's view the Estonians had accepted Catholicism by the late Middle Ages, 'at least at a popular level',[46] but the proliferation of evidence for pre-Christian religion

[42] Kala, 'Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands', p. 18.
[43] Kala, 'Rural Society', p. 187. [44] Madar, 'Estonia I', p. 258.
[45] Kala, 'Rural Society', p. 188.
[46] Kala, 'Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands', p. 19.

in Estonia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries renders such a view controversial. The Lutheran Reformation arrived in Estonia in the 1520s and Taagepera considered that Christianity finally started to take hold in Estonia by around 1530, when Lutheran services were first conducted in the Estonian language. The first Estonian-language book appeared in 1535, although translations of the Bible did not appear until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[47] A number of Estonian witchcraft trials are recorded from the sixteenth century, some of which featured poisoning but no recognisably 'pagan' elements.[48] In Heiki Valk's view, the impact of the Reformation on the Christianisation of Estonia was small and it would be another 150–200 years before the country was meaningfully Christianised.[49]

In the sixteenth century the German-speaking elite of Livonia became more and more suspicious of the Estonian-speaking peasants, portraying them as an 'enemy within' Livonian society.[50] However, the rejection of Christianity was no longer as politically significant in sixteenth-century Estonia as it had been two centuries earlier during the St George's Night uprising. In 1560, during the Livonian War, some of the Estonians revolted against their German masters and chose a peasant 'king', as they had in 1343, but this time it was social rather than religious difference that was a flashpoint for political violence.[51] The Livonian War was fought for

[47] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 94.
[48] Madar, 'Estonia I', pp. 259–60.
[49] Valk, 'Christianisation in Estonia', p. 578.
[50] Kaljundi, 'Pagans into Peasants', p. 387.
[51] Kaljundi, 'Pagans into Peasants', pp. 380–1.

control of Livonia between Muscovy on the one hand and an alliance of Poland–Lithuania and Sweden on the other. Poland–Lithuania and Sweden eventually prevailed, with the northernmost portion of Estonia passing to Sweden (the Duchy of Estonia) while the rest of Livonia was divided between the Duchy of Livonia and the Duchy of Courland, both of which were vassal states of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth but continued to be governed by a largely Lutheran Baltic–German elite.

There was one story about Livonia that seized Europe's imagination, brought the region to prominence, and may or may not have something to reveal about the nature of pre-Christian Latvian religion. Although its roots lie in Herodotus and Pomponius Mela's ancient report of werewolves among the Neuri,[52] the modern idea of the Livonian werewolf first emerged in Olaus Magnus's *History of the Northern Peoples*:

> The inhabitants of Livonia, Prussia and Lithuania suffer great losses on their cattle from wolves all year long, because in the woods, once the animals venture only a small distance away from the herd, wolves dismember and devour them; nevertheless, they do not consider these losses as great as those inflicted on them by humans turned into wolves. On Christmas Day when dusk falls, large numbers of wolves, into whom humans from various parts have turned, meet up in an appointed place, and attack both animals and humans with such unbelievable ferocity that they cause the inhabitants of these countries much greater losses than wolves … They break into beer cellars, drink several barrels of beer and also simple, homemade

[52] *BRMŠ*, vol. 1, p. 132.

beer, and then stack the empty barrels on top of one another in the centre of the cellar; in this manner they differ from wolves … Between Lithuania, Samogitia and Curonia there is a wall, a ruin of a castle, where thousands of them meet at a certain time of the year, and they try their prowess at jumping: those who cannot jump over the wall, as happens to the fatter among them, are whipped by their leaders. Finally, it is said that also great lords and even most respected members of the nobility can be found among them … Whoever wants to can be turned into a wolf and all his life meet with his fellows at certain times and bring destruction, yes even death to humans and animals. He will receive from a person who is a master of these enchantments this art of transformation so completely opposed to nature, and this happens in this manner, that he will give him a cup of beer to drink … and pronounces certain words.[53]

The Lithuanian and Latvian words *vilkólakis/vilkolakas* (cognate with Polish *wiłkołak*) literally mean 'wolf-skin',[54] perhaps reflecting an original idea of someone who ritually transformed themselves into a wolf by putting on its skin. Such an idea is immediately evocative of shamans 'becoming' animals in trances and wearing the skins and pelts of animals. The Livs, the Finnic people who inhabited coastal Latvia and originally gave their name to Livonia, could be one possible source of a shamanistic influence on Latvian religion, since there is scant mention of werewolves in the early records of Lithuanian belief – and Baltic religion does not seem to have featured shamanism in the same way as Finnic cultures. In Sámi belief people could turn themselves into animals, and in

[53] Olaus, *Historia*, fols 150r–151r. [54] *LBM*, p. 226.

Scandinavian folklore wild animals which attacked livestock were sometimes said to be metamorphosed Sámi who had been refused charity by Scandinavian farmers.[55] It is possible that similar colonial anxieties about the pre-Christian powers of subjugated peoples produced stories of werewolves in Livonia too.

In later folklore collected among the Livs, werewolves were popular figures and not always portrayed as cruel and dangerous[56] – which might hint at a positive role for shamans who 'became' wolves in pre-Christian Livish religion. Olaus's 'certain time of the year' may have been St George's Day (23 April); in later Estonian folklore, St George was treated as a spirit, apparently separate from his identity as a Christian saint, who protected flocks and cattle from wolves. St George was said to ride through the forest with a pack of wolves, or even on a wolf; he was considered to be the master of wolves and farmers made agreements with St George every spring.[57]

The problem with such speculations is that Olaus seems to be our sole sixteenth-century source for belief in werewolves in Livonia and he was not an author with much detailed knowledge of the eastern Baltic region. Salomon Henning and Paul Einhorn made similar reports about werewolves in 1589 and 1627, but these post-date Olaus and we must be wary of the possibility that Olaus simply initiated a textual tradition which was followed and elaborated by subsequent authors.[58] The absence of any mention of werewolves from the works of

[55] Kent, *Sámi Peoples of the North*, p. 85. [56] *LBM*, p. 223.
[57] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, pp. 76–7. [58] *LBM*, p. 224.

other ethnographers of the Baltic, such as Jan Łasicki, is a striking omission – especially since Olaus himself claimed werewolf belief was rife in Samogitia as well. However, considerably more evidence for the Livonian werewolf tradition emerged in the seventeenth century, which will be considered in Chapter 4.

Besides the theme of werewolves, information on Latvian religion is scant until the very end of the sixteenth century. In the 1580s Jan Łasicki mentioned the burial rites of the Livonians, 'who are oppressed by the hard servitude of the Germans', and emphasises their oppressed status – to the point where death was seen as an escape to a better existence.[59] In 1570 Salomon Henning (1528–1589) noted in his *Warhafftiger und bestendiger Bericht* ('True and Consistent Report') of Livonia that the Latvians prayed to snakes and toads:

> They are said to have prayed to snakes and evil toads, from whose bodies, when crushed, large amounts of milk pour out. Because the old sorceress Breckin,[60] whenever they came together, would perform evil magic and cry, *Man pane math!* 'Oh, my wetnurse!'

One possible reason for the veneration of these snakes and toads, and an explanation for their association with milk, is that Piena māte ('Mother of Milk', one of the many Latvian divine mothers), who protected cows, could take the form of a snake or toad.[61]

The first detailed account of Latvian religion, however, appears in a 1599 letter of the Jesuit Petrus Culesius

[59] *PEMB*, p. 149. [60] The Latvian domestic spirit Brēķina.
[61] *LBM*, pp. 46–7.

(1572–1641) to the Jesuit vice-provincial Paulus Boxa. The Jesuits regarded the pagans of Livonia as even worse than those of Samogitia, because whereas the Samogitians were subject largely to Catholic influence, the Livonians were 'completely corrupted by heretics' (i.e. Lutherans) as well as idolatry.[62] Culesius, who was a native of the Latvian town of Cēsis,[63] told Boxa that he had travelled from Riga to Rēzekne in Latgale (eastern Latvia), where 'infinite numbers of natives are entirely submerged in horrible superstitions'. Culesius's horror, and the detail in which he describes Latgalian religion, suggests he was unaware of the extent to which pre-Christian religion still held sway in the east of the country.

Culesius underlined the remoteness of the region, rendered inaccessible by marshes, and although he admitted that no one would reveal their superstitious rites to him, he described them anyway. The people were primarily tree-worshippers, holding trees to be sacred to Percunus and Zemes Deves;[64] they also worshipped Lelo Deves, whom they identified as thunder. On St John's Eve (23 June) an old man chosen as priest from the community would sacrifice a goat, a black cockerel, and a hen and make a libation of beer, before smashing the cup and setting everything alight, together with branches taken from trees; the Latgalians then offered coins to the flames. In the autumn, as a thanksgiving for the harvest and an offering for a safe winter, a lamb and a white cockerel and hen were sacrificed to Lelo Deves and similar sacrifices were

[62] *BRMR*, p. 75.
[63] On Culesius see Viiding, 'Livonian, Lithuanian and Polish Jesuits', p. 96 n.31.
[64] Either Žemepatis or Zemes māte (*LBM*, p. 239; pp. 232–3).

made beneath trees in order to avert drought or bring rain. At Easter and on St Martin's Day (11 November) they made offerings of eggs and beer at trees, and he described a rite in honour of the 'mother of the gods' in which a hen was held upside down with its head in a barrel of beer and drowned; Culesius reported that women were excluded from participation in any of these rites, although an old woman functioned as a seer who communicated with the spirits of the ancestral dead at funerals.[65]

Intriguingly, Culesius reported that 'innumerable stories are told everywhere among them concerning the mother of the gods and demons',[66] but he declined to recount them; nevertheless, this is early evidence that the Latvians had a mythology as well as rites. Culesius did what he could to try to persuade the people to abandon pre-Christian rites, and he encouraged the Polish and German landowners to command the felling of sacred trees on pain of death. After hearing 140 confessions, Culesius left the area for Valmiera. It is easy to see how such occasional visits by individual missionary Jesuits, without ongoing pastoral support, made little long-term religious impact. Culesius may have witnessed some of these pre-Christian rites first-hand, but it is likely that most of his information derived from the penitents he attempted to disabuse of their idolatrous errors.

The apparent importance of events in the Christian calendar such as Easter, St John's Eve, and St Martin's Day suggests some sort of sub-Christian or 'Christianesque' influence on the unchristianised people of Latgale, at the very least – awareness of the date of Easter, in particular,

[65] For Culesius's account see *BRMR*, pp. 93–8. [66] *BRMR*, p. 97.

suggests they had some knowledge of Christianity – and that the Latgalians had, perhaps, decided to creatively construct their own creole community religion in the absence of any consistent ministry offered by Christian clergy who cared about them or knew their language. To attempt to identify this religion as securely 'Christian' or 'pagan' is to miss the point that people in remote, unchristianised areas created ritual practices at need for their communities, as a response to a religious crisis instigated by missionaries. Thus, for example, we know from archaeologists that the Latvian tradition of round stones with a cup mark, where much evidence of offerings has been found, was one that *began* in the sixteenth century[67] – in contrast to offering sites in Karelia and Finland which, as we have seen, were sometimes used continuously from prehistory. The Latgalians' willingness to update their rites can be seen in their use of coins as offerings, something which archaeologists have detected at sacred sites in Estonia from the seventeenth century onwards.[68]

In 1560 the master of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order sold Courland to the Lutheran Duke Albert of Prussia, who sent the missionary pastor Johannes Funck to the region. Funck reported the continued existence of *weideler* (pagan priests). Two years later, however, Duke Gotthard Kettler of Courland was still deploring the people's negligence with regard to baptism. They continued to sacrifice animals in honour of their dead parents or friends, and in the same year an ecclesiastical ordinance for Courland denounced unauthorised burials

[67] Urtāns, 'Cylindrical Ritualistic Stones', p. 51.
[68] Jonuks and Äikäs, 'Contemporary Deposits', pp. 13–17.

in woods or fields.[69] However, at least some of what the Lutherans denounced as 'great abomination of idolatry' was Catholic-inflected popular Christianity, such as the 'festival of St John's Fire' described by the chronicler Balthasar Russow in 1578. While Russow was offended by the folk music (especially bagpipes) that accompanied these festivities, and by women throwing coins at the altar at the monastery of St Birgitta, it remains the case that no element of these festivities could be considered anything other than Christian.[70]

Prussia: Fighting Paganism in an Outpost of Lutheranism

In 1525 the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Albert von Hohenzollern, did homage to the king of Poland as duke of Prussia, abandoning his religious vows and his Catholicism and embracing Lutheranism; henceforth Prussia was to be a hereditary duchy under the Hohenzollern dynasty, with significant consequences further down the line for Europe and the world. For now, however, Ducal Prussia was a self-governing fief of the Polish Crown and an eastern outpost of the Lutheran Reformation. In 1544 Albert founded a university in Königsberg, the Albertina, which was the first university in the Baltic; but the ordinary people of Prussia remained largely unchristianised, which represented both a challenge and an opportunity for the new Lutheran regime. Albert had, in effect, opened up a religious battle for

[69] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, pp. 188–9.
[70] For Russow's account see Mand, *Urban Carnival*, pp. 170–1.

himself on two fronts, against both Catholicism and paganism. An ordinance against superstitions was issued in 1541, followed by another in 1558 which imposed the death penalty for magicians and diviners.[71]

From a Lutheran point of view, the Teutonic Knights' failure to convert the native Baltic Prussians over the course of nearly three centuries of occupation underlined the shortcomings of Catholicism. The contempt in which Catholics held the native Prussians can be seen in the work of the Prussian humanist Johannes Stüler, who gave himself the Latin name Erasmus Stella and published a history of Prussia in 1518:

> Their life differs in no way from that of wild beasts. Shipwrecked people, or those tossed up out of the sea from a storm, are more civilised; and even though there is assistance for them all around, there is remarkable filthiness and filthy poverty among the rest.[72]

Stüler was adamant that the Prussians had not even managed to invent their own religion, which they borrowed from the Sudovians.[73] However, he gave a few details about Prussian religion, telling us that they believed their gods dwelt in trees (especially the elder) and uttered oracles from inside their trunks.[74] A much more thorough treatment of Prussian religion was written by the Dominican friar Simon Grunau, whose *Preussische Kronik* ('Prussian Chronicle') of 1529 went into great detail about Prussian deities, rites, beliefs, and sacred sites.[75] However, in the 1920s Christian Krollmann showed quite convincingly that

[71] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 188. [72] *PEMB*, p. 75.
[73] *PEMB*, p. 77. [74] *PEMB*, p. 79.
[75] Grunau (ed. Perlbach), *Preussische Chronik*, 3 vols. On Grunau's deities see Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, pp. 237–41.

Grunau's *Chronicle* was largely confabulated[76] – a scholarly orthodoxy that still mostly holds, even if the Lithuanian folklorist Gintaras Beresnevičius took the view that a confabulation at a particular moment in history still potentially has a great deal to reveal about the state of knowledge of Prussian religion at the time.[77] It is a fair point, and as a fascinating cultural artefact Grunau's *Chronicle* has a great to say about the self-understanding of Prussia in the early Reformation period and its relationship to its own history and its Old Prussian-speaking population. But it should perhaps be studied by literary scholars rather than historians.

The presence of the Albertina in Königsberg, and its printing press, meant that there was not only academic curiosity about Prussia's religious heritage but also the potential to share it more widely. In 1535 the humanist Poliander (Johann Gramann) reported to his friend Caspar Boxner that the Sudovians were particularly stubborn in their attachment to their ancient rites and refused to intermarry with the rest of the Prussians, let alone contemplate conversion to Christianity.[78] In around 1545 the Polish-born Lutheran pastor of Lyck, Jan Malecki, wrote a letter to George Sabinus recounting a goat sacrifice and other rites he claimed to have witnessed among the Sudovians, known as the 'Sudovian Book' (Plate 10). The letter was published in 1551, but Jan Malecki's son Hieronim, a Königsberg publisher, brought out a new and much augmented edition in 1561 entitled *The Little*

[76] Krollmann, *Religionswesen der alten Preußen*, pp. 14–17.
[77] Beresnevičius, 'Rickoyotto šventykla', pp. 621–9.
[78] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 189.

Book on the Sacrifices and the Idolatry of the Old Prussians. In his dedicatory letter to David Voit, Hieronim Malecki decried the Catholicism of the Teutonic Knights as little better than the paganism that came before it:

> For before these times [Prussia] was in the saddest shadows of impious cults, which the Old Prussians, Livonians and Sudovians exhibited for their deities. Then it was submerged in the horrible furies of the popes, from which men fell into such confusion of opinions that they considered that God might be placated and propitiated by whatever sacrifices and rites were brought in by the audacity of human invention. Then, however, they meanwhile understood nothing either of the being nor of the will of God.[79]

The Maleckis' *Little Book* described a libation to the god Pergrubris made on St George's Day as well as a harvest rite called Zazinek or Ozinek; this was the Sudovian goat sacrifice, which took place inside a granary and at which a litany of deities was supposedly invoked. The book also covered the placation of domestic spirits, the cult of snakes, divination rites, weddings, and funerals.[80] This short text would be much mined by later authors, in Lithuania as well as in Prussia – probably because it was one of the few published texts about Baltic religion available at the time in Latin. Prussia's relics of pre-Christian religion came under particularly intense scrutiny, not only because they provided valuable propaganda against the failures of the Catholic church but also because there were 'pagans' on the doorstep of Königsberg for students of the Albertina to study.

[79] *PEMB*, p. 117. [80] *PEMB*, pp. 121–9.

Lithuania and Samogitia: The Lost Worshippers of Aesculapius?

In the early sixteenth century unchristianised ethnic Lithuanians were living in Lithuania Minor under the rule of the dukes of Prussia (the eastern part of today's Kaliningrad Oblast, together with a coastal strip running north to Klaipėda, known as Memel to the German Prussians) as well as in Samogitia and in the remainder of what is Lithuania today, and even in parts of what is now northern Belarus. The position of ethnic Lithuanians in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania made them unique among the unchristianised peoples of early modern Europe: the Grand Duchy's elite was Lithuanian, as well as the peasantry. This fact was, of course, a political consequence of the unusual way in which Lithuania came to be formally converted in the late fourteenth century. The pagan elite of the old pagan Grand Duchy remained in place, adopting Christianity and becoming, over time, gradually more polonised.

In spite of the fact that most of the Lithuanian nobility spoke Polish at home by the second half of the sixteenth century, they remained intensely aware of their distinctively Lithuanian identity. The extinction of the Jagiellonian dynasty, which had united Poland and Lithuania in personal union, resulted in a unique political arrangement between the Crown of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1569: the Union of Lublin, which provided for an elected head of state who would be simultaneously king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania. The Union treated Poland and Lithuania as two sovereign nations that shared an elected monarch and some

institutions of governance; there was no sense in which Lithuania became part of Poland, or vice versa; for better or worse, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was always a delicate political dance of shared sovereignty. This political and cultural situation created unique conditions for the imaginative exploration of Lithuania's pre-Christian identity, for early modern Lithuania was a country in search of a legendary past. Lithuania needed a pagan origin myth to compete with Poland's illustrious Christian history, and now that the nation's political future lay with the Lithuanian nobility as electors of the grand duke, they required an impeccable cultural pedigree.

However, while most of Lithuania did not experience colonisation, it did undergo religious turmoil in the sixteenth century. Lithuania Minor was under a Lutheran religious dispensation from the 1520s, resulting in the publication of the earliest books in the Lithuanian language at Königsberg, and although the grand dukes of Lithuania were Catholics the Radziwiłł family who actually ran Lithuania as grand chancellors were Calvinists and Unitarianism was also spreading in the Grand Duchy.[81] Hot on the heels of the Calvinists came the Jesuits, eager to return Lithuania to the fold of Catholic Christendom, who founded an academy in Vilnius in 1579. Lutherans, Calvinists, and Jesuits (as well as other Catholic religious orders) competed to Christianise the pagan Lithuanians, although in many places ethnic Lithuanians lived alongside Orthodox Ruthenians who had been Christian for

[81] On the Lithuanian Reformation see William, *The Radical Reformation*, pp. 991–1062.

centuries, but were equally the targets of Protestant and Catholic missionary activity.

In 1503, in a charter founding the church at Ramygala, Grand Duke Alexander Jagiellon noted that the people 'rarely or never' visited the one available church.[82] A priest in the same year complained that his parishioners did not come to church, did not have their children baptised, did not marry in church and buried their dead in the marshes, as well as worshipping snakes.[83] A trickle of new church foundations continued; in 1507 the voivode of Vilnius endowed a church at Tauragė, 'knowing that the villagers and peasants are still imbued with the errors of paganism and idolatry even now, so that it is very difficult for them to be called away from their accustomed worship of domestic lares [domestic spirits]'.[84] Not all outside commentators reported pagans in Lithuania, however; according to the Polish German Justus Ludwik Decjusz, writing in 1521, 'The whole of Poland, greater and lesser, and similarly Lithuania and Samogitia and almost the whole of Ruthenia follow the Roman church', mentioning only the Lithuanian Tatars as exceptions.[85] But given that Decjusz thought most Ruthenians (who were in fact Orthodox) were loyal to Rome, he is not an especially reliable witness to the religious composition of Lithuania. In one sense Decjusz was right, however; it was possible to give one's allegiance to a particular church without understanding or internalising its teachings.

[82] *BRMR*, pp. 52–3.
[83] Baronas and Rowell, *Conversion of Lithuania*, p. 4.
[84] *BRMR*, p. 53. [85] *BRMR*, p. 56.

The poet Nicolaus Hussovianus (c. 1480–c. 1533) was certainly concerned about the continued presence of paganism in Lithuania. In a 1525 poem about St Hyacinth, an early Dominican missionary in thirteenth-century Lithuania, he noted that 'Not far from us groves are venerated, and men offer libations to the high trees; they cast grain into the rivers, and worship the spirit of the god of the waters.'[86] Indeed, Hussovianus's anti-pagan polemic extended beyond Lithuania; he denounced the sacrifice of a black bull that took place in the Roman Colosseum in 1522 as disgraceful backsliding into paganism,[87] and he even rejected the use of Classical deities as metaphors and images in his poetry: 'In place of Jove I worship Christ, and my poems address not Juno, but the Mother of Christ. I refuse to mingle the truth with fable.'[88] Hussovianus's reluctance to engage with the Classical pagan past was unusual for his time, and it is possible that his first-hand knowledge of pre-Christian cult among Lithuanians left him with mixed feelings about the Renaissance love of all things pagan. Hussovianus was not alone in his suspicions; in 1528 Bishop John of the Lithuanian Dukes expressed misgivings about the intensity of processions of the consecrated host during the young phase of the moon, when in Lithuanian folklore the young moon is called 'the son of god'.[89]

By the 1530s there was an expectation that Lithuanians should appear at least outwardly Christian. In 1533 Andreas Nadbor founded a church at Suviekas, 'so that

[86] Hussovianus (ed. Pelczar), *Carmina*, p. 86 (lines 540–42).
[87] Hussovianus (ed. Pelczar), *Carmina*, pp. 100–2.
[88] Hussovianus (trans. Booth), *Song of the Bison*, p. 29.
[89] Rowell, 'Fifteenth-Century Lithuanian Catholicism', p. 97.

Christ's faithful, on account of the closeness of the church, might there return more fervently to the worship of God … and so they should not worship inanimate things – that is, trees, stones, rivers, snakes and things of that sort as gods, idolatry accompanying the faith of Christ …'.[90] This form of words suggests that Nadbor regarded the Lithuanians as Christians and was willing to excuse their idolatry (at least in part) on the grounds that they had nowhere to worship; but the picture he painted was one of dual-faith observance. When a church was founded at Joniškis in 1536, the deed of foundation spoke of the local people's idolatry in the past, but also declared that the church was 'to call them back from errors of this kind and draw them to the worship of the true God',[91] suggesting backsliding into idolatry was an ever-present danger. Grand Duke Sigismund, writing to Bishop Samuel Maciejowski in 1547, was franker still:

> For the plantation of the Christian faith in this our Grand Duchy of Lithuania is new; for the simple and unsophisticated people outside the city of Vilnius, and above all in Samogitia … worship forests, oak trees, lime trees, rivers, stones and even snakes as gods, and both publicly and privately offer them victims and holocausts …[92]

However, we should be cautious about accepting a letter from the grand duke to a bishop at face value; the Jagiellonians had legitimised themselves as rulers of Poland–Lithuania, at least in part, by their zeal for the Christian faith. In order to portray himself as a zealous Christian king like his ancestor Jogaila, it was in

[90] *BRMR*, p. 58. [91] *BRMR*, pp. 58–9. [92] *BRMR*, p. 59.

Sigismund's interest to exaggerate the extent of paganism among the Lithuanians – thus rendering his efforts to found churches and sponsor missionary activities all the more praiseworthy.

In the same year as Sigismund's letter, the first book in the Lithuanian language was printed at Königsberg, Martynas Mažvydas's catechism. In the catechism's Latin preface, Mažvydas inveighed against his fellow Lithuanians as notorious idolaters:

> I cannot recollect without great pain [that] before other nations our people is ignorant, unsophisticated and lacking in all piety and the Christian religion … Indeed, it is horrible to hear that many even now both practise and openly profess manifest idolatry. Some worship trees, some rivers, some snakes, and others other things, offering them divine honour. There are those who make vows to Perkūnas, and Laukasargis is worshiped by some for matters pertaining to grain; and Žemėpatis on account of flocks. Those who join their souls to evil arts profess the Aitvarai and Kaukai to be their gods.[93]

Like Andreas Nadbor, Mažvydas portrayed the Lithuanians as practising their idolatry *alongside* Christianity – which, to a zealous Christian, made it even worse, since the Lithuanians did not have the excuse of being untouched by the Christian faith. The willingness of Protestants like Mažvydas to pioneer the use of the Lithuanian language in print put them ahead of the Catholics. In 1594 the English Jesuit Adam Brook, who taught moral theology at Vilnius University, was pleading with the Jesuit general Claudio Aquaviva to fund

[93] *PEMB*, p. 83.

a Catholic printing press at the university to rival the Calvinist press run by the Radziwiłłs in Vilnius Castle and provide a catechism for the bishop of Samogitia to help him counter both Calvinism and paganism.[94] In 1595 Mikalojus Daukša (c. 1527–1613) translated Jacob Ledesma's Italian Catholic catechism into Lithuanian, including specific references to gods venerated by the Lithuanians.[95] In a list of those who transgressed the Ten Commandments, Daukša singled out

> those who worship the fire, Žemyna, snakes, grass-snakes, Perkūnas, trees, groves, Medeina, Kaukai and other demons; and then those who perform magic, incantations, brew potions, cast tin and wax, use foam and testicles to soothsay; also those who believe in all this: all those who abandon God, accede to the Devil and behave as if they were equal to the Lord.[96]

Reformation and Counter-Reformation undoubtedly intensified the fight against paganism in Lithuania. It is unclear to what extent the missionaries had any success; in 1589 the German traveller Johann David Wunderer reported that the Samogitians 'live like wild animals, without faith or religion, and they not only worship animals and monstrous snakes, but by diabolical arts they change themselves and take the appearance of wolves and bears'.[97]

94 On Adam Brook see Young, 'Of Divels in Sarmatia Honored', pp. 81–2.
95 On Daukša's catechism see Smetonienė, 'Textual Influences', pp. 68–179.
96 Quoted in *LBM*, pp. 96–7.
97 Quoted in Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 191.

But not everyone in sixteenth-century Lithuania viewed the continued survival of pre-Christian religion with alarm and – uniquely among European nations where pre-Christian religion survived into the early modern period – Lithuania developed a 'philopagan' tradition that co-opted paganism as an integral aspect of the nation's heritage. As we have seen, already in the fifteenth century the Polish chronicler Jan Długosz had mooted the possibility that the Lithuanians were descended from Romans, citing both the Lithuanian language and Lithuanian religious practices as proof of this. The second recension of the *Chronicle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Samogitia*, compiled in Ruthenian between 1510 and 1517, gave a name – Palemon – to the imagined leader of a group of Romans who colonised Lithuania in the time of Nero.[98] Christine Watson has argued that Długosz probably documented a story that was genuinely current at the time, since he did not usually display a great deal of interest in Lithuania.[99] In Robert Frost's view, the *Chronicle* was responding to a Polish historiographical tradition that portrayed the Lithuanians as barbarous, as well as Muscovite claims of Roman ancestry.[100]

In 1555 Martin Kromer identified the Palemon of the Ruthenian chronicles with a certain Publius Libo,[101] while Albertas Goštautas (c. 1480–1522), grand chancellor of Lithuania from 1522, may have been responsible for an alternative Lithuanian origin myth in the

[98] Rowell, *Lithuania Ascending*, p. 41; Watson, *Tradition and Translation*, pp. 42–3; Guagnini, *Sarmatiae Europeae descriptio*, fol. 45r.
[99] Watson, *Tradition and Translation*, p. 42.
[100] Frost, *Oxford History of Poland–Lithuania*, pp. 413–14.
[101] Kromer, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum*, p. 61.

Bychowiec Chronicle (c. 1525). According to this narrative, five hundred families had accompanied a Roman prince, Apolonus, to Lithuania in order to escape the depredations of Attila the Hun in Italy (although this presumably meant Goštautas's Roman exiles were Christians). The *Bychowiec Chronicle* was specifically designed to counter the Polish historian Maciej z Miechowa's portrayal of Lithuania as a subordinate partner in the personal union with Poland and was calculated to present Poland and Lithuania as equals. In 1553 Wenceslaus Agrippa confidently asserted in a funeral oration for Jan Radziwiłł that 'the speech of the Lithuanians was once Latin',[102] and later Augustinus Rotundus (c. 1520–1582), secretary to Grand Duke Sigismund II Augustus, even proposed that Latin should be restored as Lithuania's national language.[103] Latin epics based on the model of Virgil's *Aeneid* proved popular in early modern Lithuania,[104] and pagan characters made an appearance in the most significant of these: Jan Radwan's *Radivilias* (1592), a tribute to Mikołaj Radziwiłł 'the Red' (1512–1584). The pagan augur Lizdeika appears in order to interpret Grand Duke Gediminas's dream of an iron wolf, which led him to found the city of Vilnius,[105] and the poem contains no condemnation of Lithuania's pagan past.

The combination of pride in Lithuania's medieval (pagan) past and strong classicising tendencies among the

[102] Quoted in Jurgelėnaitė, 'Vilnius University', p. 140.
[103] Dini, *Prelude to Baltic Linguistics*, pp. 56–8.
[104] Niedźwiedź, 'How Did Vergil Help Forge Lithuanian Identity', pp. 35–48. For examples of Lithuania's Latin epics see Young (ed.), *Poetry and Nation-Building*.
[105] Radwan, *Radivilias*, sig. i iiij^{r-v}.

Lithuanian elite created the conditions for a cautiously sympathetic reappraisal of Lithuanian religion as a relic of the prestigious pagan cult of the Romans. Writing in around 1550, an author known as Michalo Lituanus ('Michalo the Lithuanian') portrayed Lithuanian religion as something only recently extinguished, but described it with none of the censure of earlier authors:

> the old rites of the Romans … were not abandoned so long ago among us – that is to say, the cremation of human corpses, auguries, omens, and other superstitions. The cult of Aesculapius still very greatly endures in certain places, who is worshipped under the form of the serpent who once migrated to Rome from Epidaurus, and is had in veneration. And the sacred household gods, shades of the dead, guardian spirits, ghosts, hills, caves, lakes, and groves are worshipped. But it is not long since that holy and perpetual *ugnis* (that is, fire) was extinguished by the water of baptism.[106]

Michalo Lituanus wrote this in the context of a jeremiad against his native Lithuania as a land that, in comparison with Muscovy and the Crimean Tatar khanate, had become soft and corrupt; the implication, for the Renaissance humanist Lituanus, was surely that Lithuania had been better off – politically at least – as a pagan nation. While the Baltic worship of snakes had traditionally been a source of horror for Christians – the devil was, after all, transformed into a snake in Genesis 3 – Lituanus turned this on its head by associating the snake cult with Aesculapius, the Graeco-Roman god of healing – whose snake entwined around a staff was widely used as a symbol of medicine in early modern Europe and also happened

[106] *PEMB*, p. 93.

to evoke the serpent lifted up by Moses on his staff in the wilderness as a type of Christ (John 3:14). Lituanus's use of the Lithuanian word *ugnis* was also pointed; the marginalisation of the Lithuanian language was part of Lithuania's decline from its primitive grandeur.

Lituanus was not the only humanist author to have mixed feelings about the fate of Lithuania's native religion. In a poem of around 1569 addressed to Jerzy Pietkiewicz, bishop of Samogitia, the Spanish–Lithuanian poet Petrus Royzius simultaneously celebrated the triumph of Christianity and seemingly mourned the destruction of Samogitian religion, in strikingly ambivalent language:

> Now he leads the snakes among things of ridicule, who previously had been a deity to the people in that place; where once was worship, the tree with fortunate branches, rising up with much luxuriant foliage, is now violated by violence – by the hard strike of the axe, compelled to be burnt in the midst of funeral pyres. The grove lacking light, forgetful of the honour of the rites, having been cut down is routed before the farmer's feet.[107]

Maciej Stryjkowski, meanwhile, adopted a sympathetic attitude to Lithuanian paganism as prefiguring the adoption of Christianity, comparing the high priest Lizdejko, who interpreted the dreams of Gediminas, to Joseph and Moses.[108] He portrayed the pagan Lithuanians like the Athenians of Acts 17, worshipping a god whom they did not yet know:

> [T]hey believed that on Judgement Day all the dead would come back to life and that some almighty god (whom they did

[107] Royzius (ed. Kruczkiewicz), *Carmina*, *Pars II*, p. 131.
[108] *LBM*, p. 253.

not know, only thinking about him in this way) superior to all the other gods would fairly judge all people good and bad atop a high and steep mountain.[109]

It was impossible to climb this mountain, Stryjkowski said, without the claws of lynxes and bears, and therefore these were thrown onto the pyre with the dead – an instance of an ethnographic report apparently confirmed by archaeology, since amulets made from bears' claws have indeed been found in funerary contexts at various sites in Lithuania.[110]

Jesuit missionaries were not immune to the 'Romanising' interpretation of Lithuanian religion. In 1583 the Jesuits of Vilnius identified Perkūnas, whom the Lithuanians honoured with perpetual fire in the sacred woods, 'imitating the Roman Vestals', as Jupiter, and quoted the saying of Petronius, Lucretius, and Statius, 'Fear first made gods in the world.'[111] Such *interpretatio Romana* had a long pedigree in the Baltic; in 1530 Georg von Polenz, the Lutheran bishop of Sambia, and Paul Speratus had identified the gods Potrympos and Bardoayts as 'Castor and Pollux' (although Bardoayts (Bardaitas) later came to be identified as a god of ships, perhaps by analogy with the Roman god Portunus).[112] Similarly, in his 1582 *Chronicle* Stryjkowski described Lithuanians sacrificing to the horse god Chauriri 'like ancient Greeks and Romans asked Mars'.[113] Ukapirmas, 'first god of the sky and the earth', came to be identified with Saturn in some

[109] *LBM*, p. 251.
[110] For examples, see the digital collections of the Lithuanian National Museum: limis.lt, accessed 31 January 2024.
[111] *BRMR*, p. 75. [112] *LBM*, p. 39. [113] *LBM*, p. 55.

sixteenth-century sources, seemingly for no better reason than the idea that he preceded all other deities in existence (like Chronos/Saturn in Hesiod's *Theogony*),[114] and in 1583 the Jesuits reported that 'whom we call Larus, the pagans [call] *Dimstipa[ti]s*'.[115]

The University of Vilnius was one of the great centres of Classical learning in northern Europe, and there was nowhere else in Europe (other than Königsberg) where students and graduates could go into the countryside and witness pagan rites resembling those they read about in the Classics. This is not to say that the Jesuits were not genuinely determined to stamp out paganism – but their condemnation was undoubtedly tempered by an element of curiosity. Such curiosity was a general feature of Renaissance humanism, but it also reflected something distinctively Lithuanian. After all, no other European nation was founded on an ideological case for the right of pagans to exist, in the form of the writings of Paweł Włodkowic.

A similar odd mix of humanist curiosity and missionary zeal seems to have motivated the Polish Calvinist Jan Łasicki to write the most detailed account of Samogitian religion to date in 1582, the Latin treatise *On the Gods of the Samogitians* (which was first published in 1615). Łasicki seems never to have visited Samogitia himself, although he knew Lithuania, and he derived much of his information about the region from a Polish landowner, Jakub Łaszkowski.[116] In addition to Łaszkowski's testimony, Łasicki relied on Alessandro Guagnini's Latin *Description of Sarmatian Europe* (1581), which heavily plagiarised

[114] *LBM*, p. 199. [115] *LBM*, p. 72. [116] *PEMB*, p. 139.

the work of Stryjkowski, author of the Polish-language *Chronicle of Poland, Lithuania, Samogitia and all of Ruthenia* (1582).[117] Łasicki's *On the Gods of the Samogitians* began by first dealing with Samogitia's geography, the origins of its peoples, and material aspects of their life and their customs.[118] Eventually, Łasicki arrives at the gods themselves and gives a long list of deities associated with different aspects of Samogitian life, nature, divination, and the home.[119] He then returns to customs, describing the cult of the ancestors and making a brief digression on the beliefs of the Livonians and the Kaukai (domestic spirits)[120] before launching into a diatribe against the 'false Christians': the Orthodox Christians living alongside Lithuanian and Samogitian pagans.[121] He then returns to the Samogitian gods, although these final sections of the treatise are essentially copied from the Maleckis' book about the idolatry of the Prussians.[122]

Łasicki's *On the Gods of the Samogitians* is a tantalising but rather chaotic and difficult text which has attracted a number of different assessments.[123] Łasicki's lack of knowledge of Samogitian language and culture is evident, and the book is as much focussed on the Orthodox (as 'false Christians') as it is on surviving pre-Christian religion. Some Calvinists, such as the theologian Krzysztof Kraiński, considered Catholics and Orthodox to be 'pagans' anyway – rendering Calvinist commentary on

[117] Watson, *Tradition and Translation*, pp. 32–3.
[118] *PEMB*, pp. 131–41. [119] *PEMB*, pp. 141–7.
[120] *PEMB*, pp. 146–51. [121] *PEMB*, pp. 150–5.
[122] *PEMB*, pp. 155–63.
[123] For detailed analysis see Jaskiewicz, 'A Study in Lithuanian Mythology', pp. 65–106; Łasicki (trans. Ališauskas), *Pasakojimas*, pp. 7–97.

'paganism' potentially problematic.[124] Łasicki's plagiarism of the Maleckis, who were writing about Prussia, is also concerning and suggests that Łasicki was both running short of material and did not bother to distinguish between different Baltic cultures. Łasicki created non-existent deities by misinterpreting customs and words, or by errors of transcription or spelling. For example, he perpetuated an error found in Jan Malecki and the *Preussische Kronik* by naming Gardaitas (or similar) as a god of ships and sailors, when this was almost certainly a mistranscription of the ship god Bardaitas,[125] and he mistook the Lithuanian name for the cherry tree, *kirnis*, for the name of a god.[126]

Łasicki may not have been certain of his book's purpose himself, of course. But *On the Gods of the Samogitians* is not entirely worthless as ethnography, and the testimony Łasicki obtained from the landowner Łaszkowski is especially interesting, since Łaszkowski reported how the Samogitians responded to missionaries: 'To the one preaching the one God, the idolaters replied, "Who are you, one God, that you instruct us as if more powerful than all of ours? Many can do more than one, and more can do more."'[127] On another occasion, Łaszkowski ordered his Samogitian peasants to fell trees, revealing an ambivalent attitude among the Samogitians to 'sacred' nature:

> they did this most unwillingly, and not before he entered upon the work himself. For they are persuaded that gods dwell in

[124] Bem, *Calvinism in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth*, pp. 185–6.
[125] *LBM*, pp. 80–1. On Bardaitas see *LBM*, pp. 38–9.
[126] Young, *Twilight of the Godlings*, p. 98. [127] *PEMB*, p. 139.

the forests. The effect of this conviction follows; for in their woods certain horrible things are seen, and spectres present themselves as much to the ears as to the eyes of those watching. Then one inquired among the others whether it was permitted to strip the bark from trees. When the official gave his assent, he stripped its bark with a great effort, repeating this: 'You have despoiled me of my geese, cockerels and hens; therefore I will make you naked.' For the madman believed that gods harmful to his family dwelt within the trees and their bark.[128]

Where the Sámi, Estonians, and Latvians were demonised as witches or werewolves in the sixteenth century, and their religious practices reviled as witchcraft, this was rarer in Lithuania. An exception was the case of Kotryna Gailiuvienė, who was suspected of witchcraft in eastern Prussia in 1560 and accused of invoking Rugių Boba ('old woman of rye'). The ritual seems to have involved making a wreath and sacrificing a hen, and it was accompanied by a charm that can only be partially reconstructed: 'Old Woman – at thy will, Old Woman – against thy will … wreath … rooster … you carry? a hen … to beloved God (*mielam Dievui*)'.[129] Assuming that Gailiuvienė's *mielas Dievas* was the Christian deity, it seems that she conceptualised Rugių Boba as an intercessor between her and God – perhaps something more like a folk saint than a pagan deity, even if that intercession was obtained by a 'pagan' sacrifice.

Missionaries were constantly faced with the hermeneutical choice of whether to interpret what they found in the Lithuanian countryside as paganism or witchcraft. In a 1579 visitation of the diocese of Samogitia separate

[128] *PEMB*, p. 141. [129] *LBM*, p. 168.

questions covered 'pagans' (*gentiles*) and 'enchanters and diviners' (*incantatores et divinatores*). Of the four people asked about pagans in their parishes, three denied there were any, while one, Jakub Ponikiewski the vicar of Kaltinėniai, gave the vague response 'I have heard there are also some idolaters who worship snakes, trees, stones and other things; but I do not know who they are or where they are.' Clergy and other community leaders also seemed unwilling to admit to the existence of enchanters and diviners, with only two saying they might be present in their parishes.[130] When a pig was sacrificed to the 'goddess of earth' (Žemyna?) in a Samogitian village in 1588, the Jesuits laboured to lead the villagers away 'from the use of witchcrafts', interpreting the sacrifice as a magical rather than religious act.[131]

Episcopal visitations are not always wholly reliable evidence for the reality of parish life on the ground, because it was in the interests of clergy to portray themselves as diligent pastors who did not allow idolatry or forbidden magical practices to flourish. Furthermore, the response of the vicar of Vilkija, Jan Laskowski, that the enchanters in his parish 'are many, but not public'[132] is a reminder that clergy were often outsiders: Poles or Polish-speaking Lithuanians who were the last people in the community likely to know about pre-Christian practices continuing in remote parts of the parish. In his survey of the historiography of the conversion of Samogitia, Mangirdas Bumblauskas considers a date in the sixteenth century for the successful Christianisation of Samogitia wildly optimistic, since nowhere else in Europe was

[130] *BRMR*, pp. 67–8. [131] *BRMR*, p. 82. [132] *BRMR*, p. 67.

Christianisation completed within a century and a half.[133] It is highly likely, therefore, that pre-Christian religion in sixteenth-century Samogitia was a real phenomenon: but that does not mean those who attempted to record it were those best placed to do so, or that they have bequeathed to us anything like an accurate record. At the end of the century Grand Duchess Anna Jagiellon was still founding churches in order to draw people away from idolatry,[134] although it is possible that such a form of words in the deeds of foundation for churches had become conventional in Lithuania by this time and therefore cannot be taken as evidence that more churches were really needed to defeat paganism.

Just as it was in the interests of clergy responding to episcopal visitations to downplay the prevalence of pre-Christian cults, so it was in the interests of missionaries to play them up – after all, funding is more likely to be forthcoming for missionary activities if missionaries are urgently needed to dispel the pagan darkness. Furthermore, in the context of the Counter-Reformation, Catholic missionaries in late sixteenth-century Lithuania were eager to blame the 'heretics' (Calvinists) and the Orthodox for allowing paganism to flourish. The 1583 report of the Jesuit mission in Samogitia went into considerable detail about pagan practices, but reported them all as things of the past: 'With God's help [the mission] is accomplished, so that those who derided us at the beginning and received us with laughter, having been tamed

[133] Bumblauskas, 'Samogitia's Christianisation', pp. 11–13.

[134] *BRMR*, p. 83 (Pajevonys, 1589), p. 84 (Palanga, 1590), p. 88 (Akmenė, 1596).

by frequent conversation, often listen to us and do not scruple to come together.'[135] The Jesuits encountered the forbidden practice of people taking the consecrated host home with them and keeping it as a charm, but this was an abuse widespread in European popular religion and magic'[136] – although the Jesuits claimed the host was being used in some way for rites in honour of a *Dea Telluris* ('the goddess of the earth', probably Žemyna).[137]

It would be wrong, however, to see the unchristianised Samogitians as merely ignorant, uninstructed, and without agency. A 1587 letter of Bishop Melchior Giedroyć (1536–1608) to the Jesuit general Aquaviva hints at something rather more calculated on their part. Giedroyć noted that hardly anyone in his diocese had been to confession or ever received communion, nor could they say the Lord's Prayer or make the sign of the cross. However, they were adamant they were not Lutherans and abstained from meat on Fridays, even though they 'sacrifice to thunder, worship snakes, venerate oaks as holy, [and] offer feasts to the shades of the dead'.[138] Like the Samogitian man who, according to Jakub Łaszkowski, took advantage of the landowner's command to cut down a tree in order to take revenge on the tree's spirit for his own misfortunes, Bishop Giedroyć's flock seem to have realised that the Counter-Reformation church was mainly concerned about stamping out heresy. As long as they clearly indicated that their *allegiance* was to Catholicism (by denying Lutheranism and fasting on Fridays), they

[135] *BRMR*, p. 71.
[136] See, for example, Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites*, pp. 235–6, 344–5.
[137] *BRMR*, pp. 71–2. [138] *BRMR*, p. 80.

were fairly safe in perpetuating their pre-Christian practices. The important thing was to *call yourself* a Catholic.

Frontier of Orthodoxy: Muscovite Expansion and Unchristianised Peoples

In around 1500 the Grand Duchy of Muscovy was indisputably in the ascendant as far as its eastward expansion was concerned, having eliminated competitors such as the Republic of Novgorod and the Duchy of Perm. The Christianisation of the Izhorians, a Finnic people living in Ingria (in the region of today's St Petersburg), was underway by 1500, when there was an Orthodox monastery at Tjallekino,[139] and the monastery of St Nicholas and St Athanasios at Kujvas; the monasteries of Our Saviour and St Kosmas and Damianos at Jama may also have been existence at this time.[140] But 'snake cults' and pagan shrines were still reportedly to be found among the Izhorians,[141] who had been the focus of a bloody crusade in the thirteenth century. The assimilation of *inorodotsy* (non-Russians) and *inovertsy* (non-Christians) – who were, of course, often one and the same – went hand in hand for sixteenth-century Muscovy.[142] At this point the Mordvins, Maris, Udmurts, and Chuvashes remained largely animists and retained some Indigenous leadership even if Russian settlement in their lands had already begun. Meanwhile, the Mansi, Khanty, Sámi,

[139] Pereswetoff-Morath, 'Otiosorum hominum receptacula', p. 112 n.27.
[140] Pereswetoff-Morath, 'Otiosorum hominum receptacula', po. 115, 121.
[141] Pereswetoff-Morath, 'Otiosorum hominum receptacula', p. 111.
[142] Arik, 'Islam among the Chuvashes', p. 41.

and Nenets peoples within Muscovy's sphere of influence in the far north remained more or less untouched by Christianity; their contact with Moscow was limited mainly to tributes of fur, fish, and walrus ivory.[143] However, the Muslim Tatar Khanate of Kazan still counterbalanced Moscow's influence in the Continent's far east, which prevented the thorough Christianisation or Islamicisation of Finno-Ugric peoples like the Maris and Udmurts.

Moscow's confrontation with Kazan came to a head in 1552 when the armies of Ivan the Terrible sacked the city. Mordvins and Hill Maris fought on the side of Muscovy while the Meadow Maris and Udmurts supported Kazan, leading to brutal Muscovite reprisals. While the Muslim nobility of Kazan was absorbed into the Muscovite elite, tribal leaders among the Maris and Udmurts received no such distinctions and their lands were given away to Russian colonists.[144] Muscovy's primary aim in the former Khanate of Kazan was to replace Islam with Christianity as the religion of the ruling elite, rather than to convert animists.[145] However, the Meadow Maris mounted fierce and organised resistance to Muscovite rule, leading to a series of wars between 1553 and 1584 known to Russian historiography as the 'Cheremis Wars'. Early in 1553 the Meadow Maris and their allies among the Tatars and Udmurts crossed the Volga, having defeated two Russian armies. The Russians regrouped and gained the upper hand by late 1553, but attacks against the Meadow

[143] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 53 n.7.
[144] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 55–6.
[145] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', pp. 272–3.

Maris were only possible in the summer and Tatar and Udmurt auxiliaries in the Russian armies defected to the Hill Maris. By the end of 1554 the Russians had still not managed to penetrate the heart of Mari El.

A Mari *luzhavui* (local prince) named Mamich Berdei led the resistance to Muscovy and was proclaimed 'tsar of the Maris' in 1553. In 1553 the Maris obtained a political martyr in the form of Boldush (or Poltush), *luzhuvui* of Malmyzh, who was killed fighting the Russians on 26 April 1553, a date now celebrated in the Mari El Republic as the 'Day of the Mari Hero'. In May 1553 the Russians captured the Mari stronghold on the Mesha River, forcing Mamich Berdei to relocate to a new capital at Chalym, but in March 1556 a Hill Mari leader, Altysh, invited Mamich Berdei for talks and betrayed him, handing him over to the Russians. Famine caused by Russian devastation of Mari lands brought the Mari to surrender in 1557. The first phase of the 'Cheremis Wars' was over.[146] In 1574 the Russians built the fort of Kokshaisk on the Volga after a Mari uprising in 1571–4, but in 1581–4 the Maris rose again, attacking Kazan and Nizhni Novgorod. After seven Russian military expeditions, the Muscovites began work on a network of fortresses throughout Mari El to suppress further rebellions. Maris were expelled from the town of Tsikmÿ in 1583 and it became the Russian walled town of Kozmodiemansk, and Mari urban culture was gradually eliminated; by 1594, Mari El was encircled by such walled towns with exclusively Russian populations.[147]

[146] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 204–6.
[147] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 207–8.

Taagepera has argued that the Mari put up the strongest resistance to Muscovite expansion of any people, apart from the Muslim Bashkorts, and that the Russians destroyed an embryonic Mari state that was in the process of developing its own political institutions separate from the Tatar khanate to which the Maris had once belonged. Mari El was also beginning to urbanise on its own terms before the Russians imposed their walled towns. Like the existence of Great Perm in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the existence of Mari towns challenges modern stereotypes of animists as forest-dwellers or scattered inhabitants of the remotest places. In the case of the Maris, they were obliged to live in heavily forested areas because the Russians would not allow them to live in towns. The Maris, regardless of their animism, were apparently as eager as anyone else to embrace the economic opportunities afforded by trade on the Volga and more than capable of political organisation – and this is another reason to be wary of romanticised views of animists as 'noble savages' closely tied to the land. Yet it is difficult to assess the importance of religion for the conflict; contemporary commentators on the Cheremis Wars, such as Prince Andrei Kurbskii and Sigismund Herberstein, emphasised the Maris' military prowess and did not mention their religious affiliation.[148]

The Russians needed the manpower of the Finno-Ugric peoples now under their dominion for other wars, such as the Livonian War in the west, and people who converted were rewarded with woollen clothing, a shirt,

[148] Luehrmann, 'The Magic of Others', pp. 475–6.

and a pair of boots, as well as being enlisted as musketeers in Muscovite service.[149] Further to the west, the Mordvins likewise remained animists in the sixteenth century. In that area, in 1536, the Russians founded four fortresses, bringing it definitively under subjection to Moscow, although the eastern Erzians did not come under Muscovite rule until after the fall of Kazan in 1552.[150] The second half of the sixteenth century was characterised by extensive theft of Erzian and Mokshan lands by Russians, but there was no rebellion of the kind that occurred in Mari El and missionary activity remained at a low level; the first monastery, Pymyshevaia Poliana, was not founded until 1585.[151]

Like the Maris, the animist Udmurts fought for Kazan and suffered brutal Muscovite reprisals after 1552. However, unlike the Maris, the Udmurts did not rebel against Muscovite rule and paid *iasak* (tribute) to the new rulers just as they had to Kazan, especially in the form of honey – the region was renowned for its 'bee forests'. However, the Russians do not seem to have recognised the Udmurts as a separate people from the Maris until the later sixteenth century, as the 'Votiaks' are first mentioned in a testament of Ivan the Terrible in 1572.[152] Taagepera has argued that Christianity made little progress among the Udmurts because to become a Christian gave an Udmurt the status of a Russian peasant, which had few advantages over being a *iasak*-paying animist; furthermore, the Russian colonisers may have held back

[149] Khodarkovsky, 'Conversion of Non-Christians', pp. 122–3.
[150] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 157.
[151] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 159.
[152] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 259–61.

from missionary activity likely to provoke rebellions in a remote region that would have been difficult to pacify.[153] The Turkic Chuvashes were likewise still animists in the sixteenth century, but many Chuvashes followed a rather different path under Russian rule by converting to Islam rather than Orthodox Christianity. The reason for this seems to have been the Chuvashes' strong cultural affinities with the Tatars; they had sided with the Tatars of Kazan when the Khanate of Kazan fell and the barrier of the Russian language made conversion to Islam more appealing than Orthodoxy.[154] However, some Chuvashes remained animists into the nineteenth century or, even if Christians or Muslims, held on to some pre-Christian religious practices.

Conclusion

The Reformation and Counter-Reformation created a hostile environment for Europe's last unchristianised peoples, but at the same time they intensified curiosity about them – with the result that information about them becomes more plentiful from this period onwards. Reformation and Counter-Reformation polemic, while it was not really directed against Europe's unchristianised minority, nevertheless drew renewed attention to these minorities and hastened their demise. Furthermore, anxiety about the continued survival of pockets of unconverted pagans drew accusations of religious indifference from Catholics and Protestants alike. The renewed emphasis

[153] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 262.
[154] Arik, 'Islam among the Chuvashes', p. 42.

on catechesis and confessional allegiance introduced by both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation made it harder for forms of religious co-existence, religious creolisation, and syncretism to survive, resulting in intensified Christianisation that made it difficult for unchristianised peoples to retain their traditions. However, unchristianised minorities were also treated very differently in different regions, with responses ranging from demonisation in Sápmi and Livonia to indifference (and even hints of philopaganism) in Lithuania. The tension between curiosity and condemnation in Christian commentary on Indigenous religions is a common feature of the early modern ethnographic commentary on both the unchristianised peoples of Europe and the newly encountered peoples of the New World.

As unchristianised peoples came into ever closer contact with Christianity they reached a range of political, cultural, and religious compromises with the new faith – often avowing their allegiance to it without actually practising it. Whether this was deliberate or not is difficult to gauge, however, as missionaries would often visit remote areas and then leave, with the unrealistic expectation that the locals would then continue to follow the Christian faith without a permanent pastoral presence. Whether as a deliberate choice, or simply out of necessity, people without pastoral provision fashioned their own 'Christianesque' or creole religions that incorporated elements of Christianity. In the seventeenth century, however, the antiquarian, ethnographic, missionary, and judicial attention paid to Europe's unchristianised edge was about to intensify beyond anything seen in the Reformation era.

4

Antiquarians and Witch-Hunters

The Seventeenth Century

At some point in the second half of the seventeenth century, the Lutheran pastor of Metirkviečiai (today a village in Lithuania, but then in Lithuania Minor on the Prussian side of the border) witnessed a sacrifice to the thunder god Perkūnas. Led by a *vaidilutis* (priest), the people of the parish went in procession to a large oak tree where there was a stone and a long pole from which the skin of a he-goat, flowers, and spikes of grain were hanging. A vessel containing some kind of drink stood on the stone. A woman in ceremonial dress suddenly appeared and poured a libation from the vessel onto the stone, before the *vaidilutis* drank from it and thanked the god for food and shelter. At this point the young people of the parish began to dance around the pole, but they stopped abruptly when the *vaidilutis* began another prayer. He drank from the vessel again, touched the pole, and removed the goatskin from it. Putting on the goatskin, he distributed grain to all the worshippers, before they all sat down around him as he spoke about the Baltic religion and mentioned Žemyna (the goddess of the earth) and Perkūnas.[1]

We do not know how much effort the pastor of Metirkviečiai put into stopping these proceedings – it

[1] *LBM*, pp. 153–4.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.008

was his job, after all, to ensure his parishioners worshipped only the Christian God. But he found them sufficiently interesting to report them to his friend Matthäus Prätorius, who recorded the eyewitness testimony in his book *Deliciae Prussicae* ('Prussian Delights'). Prätorius belonged to a new breed of scholar who was largely a product of the seventeenth century: the antiquary, interested in the past for its own sake, with an indiscriminate (at times) hunger for relics of the past. Building on the curiosity of the ethnographers who came before them, the antiquarians went beyond mere speculation about the origins of peoples and sought to engage more fully with the present-day realities of life at the edge of Christendom and with the material culture of the last unchristianised peoples. This is good news for the historian, since although Prätorius himself was a Baltic German and did not share the culture of the Prussians and Lithuanians, he was fascinated by the apparent antiquity of their customs and eager to record them.

But the development of antiquarianism was just one aspect of the changes that convulsed northern and eastern Europe in the seventeenth century. The 'Grand Siècle' was an era of burgeoning absolutism and the beginnings of the nation state. In both Catholic and Protestant nations, church and state worked together to bring into line peoples who deviated from accepted standards of religious belief and practice, or who spoke languages different from those of the ruling elite. At one extreme of this process of state centralisation and normalisation lay colonisation, ethnic cleansing, witch-hunting, and even genocide. At the other extreme

lay antiquarianism, the benign (but nevertheless patronising) face of an unprecedented expansion of the state into people's everyday lives.

The seventeenth century saw the near collapse of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and the aggressive expansion of Sweden, while Russia too began to flex its imperial muscles. Millions died from war and its consequences in Poland–Lithuania, while Europe's remaining unchristianised peoples (especially under Scandinavian rule in Sápmi and Livonia) found themselves under intense scrutiny of two kinds. As interest in detecting and extirpating witchcraft grew and spread to Europe's margins, traces of pre-Christian religion aroused the interest and suspicion of magistrates and witch-hunters, and the contested question of whether attachment to pre-Christian religious practices could define a person as a witch determined the fate of many. But while some in seventeenth-century Europe were determined to cast the remaining unchristianised peoples as witches worthy only of extirpation, the emphasis of both missionaries and antiquarians on 'stupidity' and 'errors' in their accounts of deviant religious practices in Sápmi and the Baltic could also make space for a more sympathetic (if condescending) hermeneutic in their approach to unchristianised peoples. The idea that remote rural people could not be blamed for their ignorance of the Christian faith – and indeed that any blame attached to the church itself – is a recurring one in early modern literature. This chapter examines the two dominant themes in Christian engagement with unchristianised peoples in seventeenth-century Europe – the fear of witchcraft and the curiosity of antiquaries – before examining how

these themes were manifested in the three regions where unchristianised peoples were still be found in this period: Sápmi, the eastern Baltic, and European Russia.

Gods of the Witches?

In the seventeenth century, trends of demonisation of pre-Christian religion that had begun in the previous century came to a head, in an intensification of persecution of unchristianised peoples in regions that were coming under ever tighter central control. While the medieval church had routinely condemned 'superstition' and brought people to trial in ecclesiastical courts, these had been for misdemeanours for which the church usually had no authority to impose lethal penalties. But the Reformation brought many of the former judicial functions of the church within the purview of the emerging early modern state and made lethal persecution much easier than in previous centuries. At the same time, anxiety about diabolism intensified in this period, putting at risk those who engaged in popular religious practices or practised syncretic or creolised faiths. It was not difficult to interpret 'paganism' as diabolism – and, indeed, for most Christian theologians, pagan worship was axiomatically the worship of demons. However, whether manifestations of pre-Christian religion were treated as witchcraft varied greatly according to region in this period. For example, while witchcraft and paganism were rarely associated in Lithuania – and the persecution of pagans as witches formed no part of central or regional government policy – the mere existence of Sámi shamanism was routinely interpreted as witchcraft, diffusing a

widespread cultural stereotype of 'Lapland' as the home of witchcraft (Plate 11).

The reasons for the surge in witch trials in seventeenth-century Europe are extensively debated by historians, and they lie beyond the scope of this study. What concerns us here is the extent to which witchcraft became a hermeneutical paradigm for pre-Christian religion at Europe's unchristianised margins in the seventeenth century. Antiquarian interest in pre-Christian religion, missionary activity, and persecuting unchristianised peoples were by no means mutually exclusive interests. Petrus Bång (1633–1696), Lutheran bishop of Vyborg, combined all three; as the author of *Priscorum Sveo-Gothorum ecclesia* ('The Church of the Ancient Sweo-Goths', 1675) he was an avid collector of antiquities, but on a missionary journey to Savonia in eastern Finland he was horrified to find that the local people were still worshipping 'their old god Kekri' on All Souls' Day. Rather than responding pastorally, he alerted the secular authorities so that they could suppress the custom by force.[2]

Similarly, the Latvian Lutheran missionary Paul Einhorn combined antiquarian interest in Latvian religion with an eager desire to suppress it, and judging from their frequent use of Classical analogies in describing it, some Jesuit missionaries in Lithuania were also fascinated by the traces of paganism they encountered. Yet they still cut down sacred trees and removed sacred rocks whenever they had the opportunity. While it might seem paradoxical to us, and alien to a contemporary sensibility to eagerly destroy what one finds culturally interesting,

[2] Toivo, *Faith and Magic*, pp. 131–2.

this was not so in the seventeenth century. Christian antiquarians (especially antiquarians who were missionaries) genuinely wanted to understand as much as they could about pre-Christian cultures, so that they could better purge them of idolatry. The imperative of curiosity and the imperative of destruction, seemingly in tension, were in reality two sides of the same coin.

The Antiquarians

Angus Vine has described early modern antiquarianism as 'a dynamic, recuperative, resurrective response to the past' that was grounded in the power of the imagination. But while antiquaries in the Mediterranean, France, the Low Countries, and the British Isles pondered the legacy of the Greeks, Romans, and early Christians, the antiquaries of Europe's northern and eastern margins rapidly came up against the challenge of understanding the legacies of pre-literate, pre-Christian cultures whose living representatives, in some cases, still lingered at the fringes of the realm. The antiquarian project thus merged with the ethnographic one, rendering the study of antiquities simultaneously the study of cultural 'living fossils' like the Sámi and the unchristianised Lithuanians. The antiquarian's indiscriminate appetite for relics of the past came into its own at Europe's unchristianised edge, regions with little or no history in the conventional sense, where Rome's reach had never extended. This absence of written history only intensified the antiquarians' eagerness to recover a lost past, and to draw on material culture, ethnographic study, and oral testimony in order to do so. If the antiquarian 'is so familiar with past customs

and traditions that he sees the past as if it were the present',[3] then the opposite was also true; antiquarians discerned the distant past in present-day popular and creolised religion among the imperfectly Christianised peoples of Europe's north and east.

Unlike the mythographers of the Italian Renaissance, whose exhaustive studies of the genealogies of obsolete Graeco-Roman pagan deities could be dismissed as 'nothing but a form of idle play' in comparison with serious arts and sciences,[4] the ethnographer-antiquarians of regions where paganism was still a living reality could justifiably claim the study of pre-Christian religion was important for advancing mission. The strength of the antiquarians was their eclectic range of methodologies, which included the gathering of 'popular antiquities' from oral testimony,[5] something the classicising ethnographers of the Renaissance would hardly have attempted. Martin Mulsow has argued that seventeenth-century antiquarians increasingly treated the history of religions as a kind of natural history, building a proto-anthropology that was distant from the condemnatory anti-pagan rhetoric of earlier authors.[6] Antiquarians such as Vincenzo Cartari (c. 1531–1590) began to move away from the view of the Church Fathers that idolatry arose from the deceptions of demons and towards the idea that certain habits of worship – such as the adoration of celestial bodies – were indeed natural to human beings.[7]

[3] Vine, *In Defiance of Time*, p. 3.
[4] Mulsow, 'Antiquarianism and Idolatry', p. 184.
[5] Williams, 'Antiquarianism', p. 84.
[6] Mulsow, 'Antiquarianism and Idolatry', p. 186.
[7] Mulsow, 'Antiquarianism and Idolatry', p. 192.

The early modern antiquarian was a stridently modern figure who was willing to augment the authority of the ancients by direct experience of antiquities. Brian Copenhaver has argued that a key factor in the transition from the early modern to the contemporary world was the breakdown of the 'reflexive deference to antiquity' that had hitherto ensured that scholarship remained essentially a philological activity.[8] Before the 'empirical turn' of the late seventeenth century, scholarship resembled a closed loop of textual reception where new information was added primarily from other textual sources in an atmosphere of deference to ancient works as well as more recent learned authors as 'authorities'. But some early modern scholars began to introduce genuinely new information from fieldwork and empirical experimentation, disrupting the deferential, authority-centred hermeneutics of the Renaissance by including first-hand testimony and fieldwork alongside received wisdom. Thus Johannes Schefferus's *Lapponia* (1673) could be said to differ qualitatively from Olaus Magnus's *History of the Northern Peoples* (1555). Neither author actually visited Sápmi. But whereas Olaus Magnus relied mainly on pre-existing textual authorities and represented a synthesis of everything hitherto written about the Sámi, Schefferus's groundbreaking innovation was to systematically cultivate informants in and from Sápmi in order to produce the most complete ethnographic work possible.[9] Crucially, he did not privilege the wisdom of the ancients over the reports of contemporaneous missionaries.

[8] Copenhaver, *Magic in Western Culture*, p. 287.
[9] Klein, *Early Modern Knowledge*, p. 156.

Sápmi: The End of Drum-Time

As we have seen, the centrality of shamanism to Sámi religious practice – and, in particular, the shamanic trance of the *noaidi* – led external observers to view Sámi religion as a kind of witchcraft or sorcery, rather than as mere idolatry. This was a hermeneutical choice with potentially lethal consequences, as persecution of people accused of witchcraft intensified in the seventeenth century. The Sámi were, to some, an entire nation of witches. In 1609 a royal proclamation imposed capital punishment for sorcery throughout Denmark–Norway, with a particular focus on the Sámi *noaidi*, although the actual number of *noaididi* put to death for witchcraft was low. Instead, the authorities often targeted Norwegian women who were said to have learnt sorcery from the Sámi. Between 1593 and 1695 twenty-seven Sámi were accused of sorcery in Finnmark; however, not everyone accused was convicted, and not everyone convicted was executed. One person put to death who was certainly a *noaidi* was Guivi Baardsen from near Alta, who was accused of magically raising a storm to sink a fishing boat and burnt at the stake in 1627.[10]

The fact that the Norwegian authorities were focussed on the idea that witches were usually women, yet only a man could be a *noaidi* among the Sámi, may have contributed to a fairly low level of executions – although the difficulties of magistrates reaching Sápmi was also undoubtedly a factor. However, because drums played a crucial role in Sámi shamanic practices, the suppression of Sámi

[10] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, pp. 106–7.

'witchcraft' could be accomplished by the confiscation of drums – an activity that blurred the lines between religious persecution and antiquarianism, since such drums were sought after by collectors of curiosities. Seventy-one of these drums are still known to be in existence.[11] Indeed, the best known of the witchcraft trials in Sápmi was focussed on a drum. This was the trial of Anders Povelsen at Vadsø in February 1692; he was accused of being in possession of and using a ritual drum (Plate 12). Povelsen had been born in Torne lappmark in Sweden, but moved to Nordlandene and Finnmark in Norway, before eventually ending up in Varanger. The accusations against Povelsen came from the Sámi themselves – perhaps because his practices differed from accepted ritual practices within their community, and perhaps even because Povelsen risked exposing Sámi ways.[12]

The Povelsen case is particularly revealing for the study of Sámi religion because the shaman was interrogated in detail about his drum and the meaning of the figures drawn on it – many of which had Christian significance. By the seventeenth century most Sámi under Danish and Swedish jurisdiction seem to have been content with a 'Christianesque' creole religion which accommodated Christian practices and symbols while perpetuating traditional Sámi ways. The Sámi supposedly identified or replaced the goddess Sáráhkká with the Virgin Mary,[13] and baptism seems to have become integrated into a creolised Sámi belief system, with the Sámi

[11] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, pp. 104–5.
[12] Rasmussen, 'Protracted Sámi Reformation', pp. 88–9.
[13] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', p. 279.

reportedly baptising their children with the name of an ancestor. However, if the wrong name was chosen, the ancestor would torment the child until the correct name was given, so Sámi children would sometimes be baptised several times – a practice forbidden, of course, from the point of view of Christian theology.[14] People seeking health or a cure for themselves or others, and good luck in hunting, began to sacrifice at churches rather than at pre-Christian sacred sites in this period.[15]

Povelsen reported that his drum featured Sámi deities such as the hammer-wielding thunder god Dierpmis, the goddesses Maddarakka and Sáráhkká, and animals such as wild reindeer. Much of the imagery, however, was related in some way to Christianity (or a Sámi understanding of Christianity), including 'God's son' (Raedienbaernie) and 'God the Father' (Radien-attje), a church, St Anne (misidentified as Mary's sister rather than her mother), the Virgin Mary, the 'Christmas men' (the Sámi conceived of the twelve days of Christmas as supernatural beings), and a cathedral.[16] Povelsen's drum was a visual testament to a creole Sámi religion that was neither straightforwardly pre-Christian Sámi religion nor orthodox Christianity; nor was it an artefact of mere syncretism, where Christian religious figures cloaked or replaced Sámi ones in a process of one-to-one equivalence, since the Sámi's own idiosyncratic interpretation of Christianity introduced wholly new figures such as the Christmas people. As it turned out, Anders Povelsen was murdered by an axe-wielding

[14] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', pp. 276–7.
[15] Rasmussen, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices', pp. 279–81.
[16] Rasmussen, 'Protracted Sámi Reformation', p. 90.

killer before he could be sentenced to death and executed, but the following year, in 1693, another *noaidi*, Anders Nilsson, was burnt at the stake at Arjeplog in Sweden. Nilsson had been found sacrificing to Sámi gods and attacked the Lutheran pastor who tried to deprive him of his drum.[17]

In the end, the Lutheran kingdoms of Scandinavia chose not to grapple with Sámi religion through mass executions for witchcraft, but via the mass confiscation of ritual drums – 'the end of drum-time', as the Swedish historian Håkon Rydving called it.[18] As we have seen, this was as much an ethnographic as a judicial project, and it fuelled scholarly interest in the Sámi. By the late seventeenth century, the Sámi were the objects of intense ethnographic and antiquarian interest owing to the efforts of the German-Swedish scholar Johann Scheffer (1621–1679), who is generally known by his Latinised name Johannes Schefferus. Schefferus was a German who was born in Strasbourg but became a professor at Uppsala University in 1648, remaining in Sweden until his death. It is possible that Schefferus's non-Scandinavian origins meant that he had not imbibed deep-seated prejudices against the Sámi from his earliest years, allowing him to approach this northernmost region with an attitude of wonder rather than horror. Schefferus's Latin book on Sápmi and the Sámi, *Lapponia* (1673), was comprehensive enough to maintain its authoritative status throughout the eighteenth century and was quickly translated into multiple European languages.[19]

[17] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, p. 106. [18] Rydving, *The End of Drum-Time*.
[19] Bergesen, 'Dutch Images', p. 104.

However, Schefferus did not write *Lapponia* on his own initiative but at the behest of the Swedish government, rendering the book a political act. On 6 February 1671, Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie (1622–1686), Lord High Chancellor of Sweden (Plate 13), wrote to the Antikvitetskollegium (College of Antiquaries) in Stockholm suggesting that one of the antiquaries turn his attention to a history of Sápmi and the Sámi:

> Should Mister Ahrenius or someone else want to write something on the way of life and customs of the Lapps, in such a way as 1) What the ancients knew about them and the land, is reported, 2) the nature of the sky and the sun at this place, 3) the way of life and customs of the people and 4) What service Sweden has of them in war or otherwise, to remove the thought that the Lapps constitute a great part of the Swedish Army, for, after all, a Lapp and an Indian are almost equally rarely viewed in Sweden, this would not seem bad to me.[20]

De la Gardie's three points of curiosity about Sápmi each had political significance. Situating Sápmi within the context of the knowledge of the ancients lent prestige to Sweden as a realm with an ancient pedigree, while the possibility that Sápmi was a place where cosmic phenomena could be studied at high northern latitudes intersected with the Swedish elite's desire to be at the forefront of natural philosophy. Furthermore, a thorough and accurate description of the life and customs of the Sámi would vindicate Swedish efforts to convert and 'civilise' these people. However, it was De la Gardie's fourth reason for wanting an account of Sápmi that was the most politically sensitive

[20] Quoted in Klein, *Early Modern Knowledge*, p. 24.

of all, as it related to the rumour (which spread during the Thirty Years' War) that the Swedish army's astonishing success in conquering large parts of northern Europe was down to the employment of Sámi 'witches' and 'sorcerers' in the army.[21] This was a rumour that even had an impact on the English Civil War, since Parliamentarian pamphleteers alleged that the Royalist leader Prince Rupert owed his victories to the assistance of his dog, Boy, who was really a witch from Lapland in canine form.[22]

Clearly, allegations of this kind were an embarrassment to a Lutheran kingdom seeking to present itself as a godly bulwark of Protestant Christendom and it was up to whoever took up De la Gardie's challenge to set the record straight. What this meant, however, was delving deeply into Sámi religion and setting aside the accumulated rumour and hearsay of previous centuries. Accordingly, Schefferus dedicated around a quarter of *Lapponia* to the subject of Sámi religion and belief (93 of 378 pages), across five chapters. Chapter VII dealt with 'the first religion of the Lapps' – that is, their pre-Christian beliefs,[23] while chapter VIII examined the 'second religion' of the Sámi, Christianity.[24] The subject of chapter IX was 'the many relics of paganism among the Lapps at this time',[25] while chapter X dealt with 'the pagan gods of the Lapps, and their cult today'.[26] Finally, chapter XI examined 'the magical rites and magic of the Lapps'.[27]

Schefferus was careful to make a distinction between the pre-Christian religion of the Sámi 'as it now is' and

[21] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, p. 106. [22] Stoyle, *Black Legend*, pp. 50–68.
[23] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, pp. 56–63. [24] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, pp. 63–85.
[25] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, pp. 86–94. [26] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, pp. 94–119.
[27] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, pp. 119–49.

'how it was before [Sápmi] began to hear the Christian faith',[28] thereby acknowledging (at least implicitly) that seventeenth-century Sámi religion was partly a creation of contact with Christianity. Indeed, Schefferus believed certain elements of Sámi religion, such as the offering of sacrifices to Juhlii in boats around Christmas time, derived from a debased understanding of Christianity – since the boats were a memory of missionaries who brought Christianity, and knowledge of Christ's birth, to Sápmi from the sea.[29]

Schefferus believed that, in all probability, the Sámi religion derived from a religion once common to all the Finnic peoples, but since nothing remained of pre-Christian Finnish religion this was difficult to prove.[30] He also noted that all the textual sources for Sámi religion post-dated the Christian era: 'Nothing is read, except what pertains to the time of the Christian religion, and the superstition which even now endures among them.'[31] For Schefferus the religion of the Sámi encountered in his own time was not, therefore, really a religion at all, but mere 'superstition'. Schefferus played up the impact of Christianity on the Sámi, while acknowledging that relics of paganism survived.[32] It served the purpose of *Lapponia* (as a book refuting the myth that Sweden exploited Sámi magic in warfare) to emphasise the extensive efforts to convert the Sámi; but Schefferus also had to explain how and why many of the Sámi remained unchristianised. Schefferus portrayed the Sámi not as totally unchristianised heathens, but rather as a people poorly instructed in

[28] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 57.
[29] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 87.
[30] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 57.
[31] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 63.
[32] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 85.

the faith who sometimes simulated Christianity because they had failed to internalise it:

> Indeed there can be no doubt that pious kings and priests have done whatever they were able, and what their works and counsels allowed, to extirpate the ancient superstitions, and all the ills consequent upon them; but not a few relics remain which they desire with an ulterior motive and concern … From this they come under suspicion, as much as if many of them were simulating the Christian faith, and really remained pagan within.[33]

Schefferus's historiography of the Christianisation of Sápmi was grounded in a Scandinavian Lutheran understanding of ecclesiastical authority where the king was the centre of the kingdom's Christian life and the clergy merely servants (and sometimes bad servants) doing his will. Sápmi was imperfectly Christianised because it was so far from royal authority and it was difficult for the king to make his will felt there. While the kings were to be praised for their efforts at conversion, the corrupt clergy were to blame for the incompleteness of conversion, and Schefferus was not unsympathetic to the Sámi themselves. Indeed, by the standards of his time Schefferus had a sophisticated understanding of the problems of converting an Indigenous people, declaring that 'The reasons why superstitions and impiety are taken away with such difficulty are truly multiple and varied.'[34] Those reasons included the vast size of Sápmi, the rudimentary nature of ecclesiastical organisation, and the poor example of the clergy, with their financial exactions on a people already extremely poor.

[33] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 86. [34] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 87.

Schefferus drew heavily on the writings of Samuel Rheen (c. 1615–1680), whose *En kortt Relation om Lapparnes Lefwarne och Sedher* ('A Short Account of the Lappish Way of Life and Customs', 1671) was based on his ministry at Jokkmokk and Råneå. However, Schefferus's decision to write in Latin rather than Swedish ensured that *Lapponia* reached a large learned audience far beyond Rheen's work. Schefferus distinguished Sámi customs that were merely 'superstitious' (*superstitiosa*) from those that were 'impious and pagan' (*impia et paganica*);[35] thus, for example, the observance of days as lucky or unlucky was merely superstitious, whereas the offering of sacrifice to pagan deities was impious. So, for example, the Sámi abstained from all activity (including hunting) on St Catherine's Day (25 November) and St Mark's Day (25 April). Like other early modern writers, Schefferus struggled to make sense of Sámi animism, drawing on Roman mythology in an effort to explain it:

> Indeed, besides the *manes* [i.e. spirits of the ancestors] they have other spectres or demons, which they say wander through the rocks, mountains, rivers and lakes, whom they accord a certain degree of divine honour, like the ancient Romans their fauns, sylvans and tritons … and there are many spirits (*numina*) which the Lapps even now are able to choose for themselves to worship with the true God and with Christ.[36]

Here, however, the Latin language proved something of an obstacle, as Schefferus insisted on translating Rheen's 'trolls' (intended to make sense of Sámi belief within the context of Swedish folklore) as *daemonia*, thus

[35] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 90. [36] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 94.

imposing a further layer of interpretation that obscured the true nature of Sámi belief. Schefferus admitted that it was natural enough for a people who spent around half the year in the polar darkness to worship the sun as a god,[37] although he did not go as far as some Italian humanists in interpreting sun worship as a form of primitive monotheism.[38] However, he mistakenly identified 'Seita' (*sieidi*) as a deity rather than a specific kind of sacred place or natural object.[39] Nevertheless, Schefferus (or his correspondents) did understand the importance of sacred sites in the landscape of Sápmi and even provided a list of them.[40] But just as he had struggled to understand animism, so Schefferus foundered somewhat when it came to describing Sámi shrines.[41] Pagans were supposed to worship anthropomorphic (or zoomorphic) idols, but the Sámi made little or no effort to make *sieididi* anthropomorphic because they are markers of the sacredness of a place in the landscape rather than 'idols' of the kind described in the Bible or Graeco-Roman literature.

When it came to Sámi rites of sacrifice, Schefferus relied on an 'anonymous manuscript' which not only described the rites but also gave the words sung by the people and officiants in the Sámi language:

> When the Lapps decide to sacrifice, then they offer victims to *Stoorjunkare*, and one strikes a drum; the others, the mothers next to the women, sing with combined voices in this way … 'What do you say, o great and holy god? Do you not accept the victim, whom I have designated to be sacrificed to you?'

[37] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 99.
[38] Mulsow, 'Antiquarianism and Idolatry', p. 184.
[39] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, pp. 99–102.
[40] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, pp. 102–3.
[41] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, pp. 104–7.

And while they thus sing they add the name of the mountain on which they want to sacrifice the victim. If *Stoorjunkare* agrees to this, a ring stands still on the place where an image of *Stoorjunkare* is painted. If *Stoorjunkare* does not assent to it, they offer a victim to Thor in the previous way, and thus sing … 'But what victim, o father god (that is, Thor) do you then want from me?' But if the ring stands on the image of Thor, the victim must be sacrificed to him.[42]

This passage reveals two of the uses for drums in Sámi religion: as musical instruments and as a method of divination. As we have seen, the coding of Sámi religion as sorcery as far back as the twelfth century had a devastating impact on the way in which the Sámi were treated in Norway and the Swedish realm as well as on perceptions of them abroad. To a certain extent, Schefferus's account of Sámi belief, more granular than anything that had come before, mitigated this perception. Schefferus offered a fairly nuanced account of the Sámi world of belief, highlighting not only the significance of Christianity but also the gradations of belief within Sámi popular religion, ranging from superstition and half-remembered Christianity to what Schefferus regarded as out-and-out idolatry. Furthermore, even this idolatry was distinct, in Schefferus's mind, from Sámi magic – a separate practice that, while implicated in Sámi pre-Christian religion, was nevertheless not the same thing as that religion.

Schefferus's new interpretative framework opened up the possibility that the Sámi might be guilty of idolatry or dissembling the Christian faith without, ipso facto, being witches – which was surely a positive development.

[42] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 109, quoting the 'anonymous manuscript'.

It diminished the possibility that witch-hunting might take the place of missionary endeavours as the Swedish Crown's response to the Sámi. On the other hand, however, Schefferus did nothing whatsoever to deny the reality of the Sámi practice of magic, not least because witchcraft was the only hermeneutic available to Schefferus to make sense of what we call shamanism: the trance state, spiritual sight, and spiritual journeying of the *noaidi*. Schefferus reported that women were excluded from Sámi sacred sites,[43] and that no woman could touch a Sámi sacred drum.[44] It is possible that the belief that women were excluded from Sámi religion may have contributed both to the persecution of Sámi men for witchcraft and, ironically, to the long-term survival of Sámi beliefs because they could be transmitted within the family with relative safety by women. While Schefferus repeated the usual authorities for the claim that the Sámi were great masters of the magical arts, he also relied on the recent (and then unpublished) writings of the Finnish clergyman Johannes Tornaeus (d. 1681) about the material culture of Sámi magic and divination – namely, Sámi drums.[45]

It was in its discussion of drums that *Lapponia* exceeded anything previously written about Sámi religion, because Schefferus actually collected material objects from Sápmi and therefore had Sámi drums in front of him as he wrote (which he had illustrated for *Lapponia*). For Schefferus's project was not only textual but also museological: his private museum in Uppsala, the Museum Schefferianum,

[43] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 103. [44] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 132.
[45] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, pp. 122–9.

contained drums, *sieididi*, and other sacred items confiscated from the Sámi,[46] and Schefferus began a Scandinavian mania for 'collecting' (or indeed stealing) Sámi sacred objects that lasted well into the twentieth century, making Sámi sacred objects a subject of active discussion and restitution in contemporary Scandinavian museology. But while Schefferus showed no compunction in condoning the confiscation of drums and did not attempt to interpret Sámi shamanism as anything other than witchcraft, he nevertheless treated the Sámi with some sympathy. He reminded his readers that the Sámi considered these practices absolutely necessary because they were constantly under threat from spiritual attack by others skilled in the same art, and that animal familiars were passed on in families (the belief that the Sámi had animal familiars may have been a confusion caused by the *noaidi*'s experience of inhabiting the bodies of different animals in trance).[47] Abandoning shamanism was therefore, for the Sámi, rather like nuclear disarmament for modern nations: ostensibly unfeasible unless everyone agreed to do it at the same time, which was unlikely to happen. While this did not morally justify their practice of witchcraft, Schefferus believed that it should at least be put in context as something entrenched in Sámi culture which was hard to eradicate.

In typical humanist fashion, Schefferus was unwilling to abandon the testimonies of existing authors or to allow more recent and more reliable evidence to challenge

[46] Sjoholm, *From Lapland to Sápmi*, pp. 8–9. On the Museum Schefferianum see also Klein, *Early Modern Knowledge*, pp. 146–53.

[47] Schefferus, *Lapponia*, p. 120.

them, preferring instead to build a more nuanced understanding of the Sámi on top of this existing base of authoritative knowledge. It would be an exaggeration to say that Schefferus discouraged witch-hunting against the Sámi – he was clear, after all, that the Sámi were indeed practising witchcraft – but he did a great deal to encourage curiosity, rather than mere hostility or hatred, as a response to Sámi culture and religion. He challenged the stereotype of the Sámi as witches in its crudest form, refuting the idea that all Sámi religion was mere witchcraft and that all the Sámi were idolatrous witches. Schefferus's reputation was such that, as a Latin text accessible to scholars all over early modern Europe, *Lapponia* became the recognised authoritative text on Sápmi and its people throughout the eighteenth century. From being the objects of fear and loathing, the Sámi became exhibits in a metaphorical museum: curiosities of the far north who clung to long-obsolete superstitions and idolatries. Whether that was a better fate for the Sámi than being persecuted as witches is less clear.

Estonia: Impudent Blasphemy or Sub-Catholic Piety?

Between 1561 and 1721 northern Estonia was a duchy within the Swedish Empire, the Duchy of Estonia, while the southern part of Estonia remained part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth until it, too, was conquered by Sweden in 1629 and became Swedish Livonia. The Estonian-speaking peasants of Estonia remained under the local rule of the Baltic German nobility, but Swedish officials sought to impose Swedish standards of

government and Swedish Lutheranism. To the extent that Christianity was practised in Estonia at all, it took a highly individual and individualised form; in 1627 each peasant in the district of Tartu was said to have a chapel where he worshipped his own saint in his own way – apparently a Christianisation of the idea of the personal *hiis* or sacred grove.[48]

Arriving in Swedish Livonia in 1629, the regent Johan Skytte was alarmed by the prevalence of 'repellent idolatry', and it became a key aim of the Academia Gustaviana (University of Tartu), founded in 1632, to equip Lutheran pastors to convert the peasantry.[49] In 1637 the Livonian Consistory urged clergy to find out 'whether the peasants still organized idol-worship … assembled on hillocks or in valleys, near chapels or chapel ruins to worship idols and sacrifice'.[50] The mention of chapels is suggestive of an intent to extirpate the remains of popular Catholicism as well as paganism. The islanders of Saaremaa were particularly stubborn; a bishop conducting a visitation in 1647 found that 'almost at every church some impudent elderly people knew nothing of Christianity and did not wish to learn it', and refused to take communion.[51]

It was not until 1667–8, however, that the Swedish Lutheran church carried out a complete visitation of Estonian parishes and found sacred groves and stones where people sacrificed in almost every locality. At the estate of Colonel Greifenspeer in the parish of

[48] Valk, 'Christianisation in Estonia', p. 574.
[49] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 277. [50] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 278.
[51] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 279.

Maarja-Magdaleena it was reported that local people performed sacrifices on Midsummer's Eve for the benefit of the sick:

> they built the fire and near the fire there was a stone with three women sitting around it; one of them is the most venerable and something like their priest, who receives the sick and their offerings and conducts the sacrificing. In the meantime the other two widows prepare the wax. Then the sick come, who have internal ailments, and must take bandages with wax and tie one around their bodies and also pick up a dipper of ale, go around the fire three times and while doing this they must bow to certain places of the stone while saying 'O help us, St John.' Having done this, they remove their bandages and hand them to the same old woman who holds it before the patient's mouth to be kissed. Then the bandage will be burned on the stone, the sick will drink from the dipper and pass it to the woman who will make the sign of the cross three times on the dipper and say, 'Help, dear St John, through these healing drugs this person', saying the sick person's name and ailment.[52]

Those who had been healed were required to return in subsequent years with gifts of wax, either in the shape of a candle or a human figure, which was then burned on the stone. This Midsummer rite, interpreted by the Swedish authorities as pagan, is a good example of creolised religion, with elements from Christianity and (presumably) pre-Christian Estonian religion recombined in a harmonious whole. The rite took place on St John's Eve (23 May), a Christian festival, and involved invocations of St John the Baptist, the sign of the cross, and votive practices (such as the offering of candles or wax images

[52] Quoted in Kahk, 'Estonia II', pp. 279–80.

of an afflicted person) not dissimilar from anywhere else in the Catholic world. On the other hand, the rite was performed by women, was associated with a sacred stone, and involved the lighting of a sacred fire – the probable pre-Christian elements. Nevertheless, in contrast to the recidivists of Saaremaa there is no indication from the description of these rites that the people of Maarja-Magdaleena were actively hostile to Christianity. It would be more accurate to say that they had formulated their own version of Catholicism, perhaps in the absence of adequate catechetical instruction over centuries, which sufficiently resembled pre-Christian rites for the Lutheran clergy to be alarmed by it. But it is not obvious that the practices of these Estonian peasants were in any way consciously pagan; they were, rather, 'sub-Catholic' – popular Catholicism developing in isolation and therefore subject to deviance, distortion, and recombination with folk practices of pre-Christian origin.[53]

The 'sub-Catholic' theme recurs in the visitation of 1668. Peasants at Vastseliina 'sacrificed' on St Laurence's Day; at Palamuse, it was on St Bartholomew's Day. Elsewhere 'sacrifices' took place on the feast of the Assumption (15 August), while at Räpina it was Ascension Day. In northern Estonia peasants gathered at ruined chapels and hilltops on St Olaf's Day, the Assumption, St Laurence's Day, and St Anthony's Day.[54] At Kalkus, the visitors reported that an old peasant 'offers bread and

[53] The phenomenon of 'sub-Catholic survivalism' from the medieval period encountered by Protestant reformers in England – in contrast to active Catholic belief sustained by Catholic missionary priests – is something I have discussed elsewhere; see Young, *English Catholics*, pp. 33–8.

[54] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 281.

milk to the Sacrament, worships idols, keeps people away from church, and tells them to blame their calamities and illnesses on the church'[55] – a strange combination of deviant devotion and hostility. But a more straightforward explanation for such paradoxical behaviour than outright rejection of Christianity is that the peasant was hostile to Lutheranism, hostile to the Swedes, and eager to maintain traditional sub-Catholic practices that he may have sincerely believed to be Christian. While Juhan Kahk has argued that some Estonian peasants in the seventeenth century still regarded Christianity as 'an alien form of magic', ridiculing the church and reviling anyone who took communion, it is not altogether clear that such reactions were very different from those of Catholics in early modern Lancashire who 'blasphemed' Protestant services of holy communion celebrated in their parish churches. Did seventeenth-century Estonians behave as they did because they were 'pagans', or because they preferred to consider themselves Catholics?

Juhan Kahk is surely right to reject the idea of a 'revival of Catholicism' among the peasantry in seventeenth-century Estonia, but it is not altogether satisfactory to explain away 'sacrifices' at ruined churches and chapels on the basis that these buildings had been erected at pre-Christian sacred sites.[56] What the visitors of 1667–8 described as 'sacrifices' may have been the making of votive offerings to the Christian God and saints at holy places, while the Estonians' attachment to ruined chapels was surely no different from popular devotion to ancient Christian holy places in post-Reformation

[55] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 280. [56] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 283.

Ireland. When visitors asked people why pre-Christian burial mounds were still in use in their parishes and why they did not bury the dead in consecrated ground in cemeteries, they received the response 'Maria's earth is everywhere.'[57] Since we know that pre-Christian burial practices persisted throughout the medieval period in Estonia,[58] it is hardly surprising that such traditions survived the Estonian reformation. But people clearly had their own, explicitly Christian, rationalisations for the perpetuation of pre-Christian burial practices – and, as David Petts has argued, burial practices are not a reliable guide to the Christianisation of a society.[59] Even the visitors themselves implicitly avowed that what they had uncovered was more like Catholicism than paganism, since they were concerned that such superstitions inclined the people towards 'the Papal faith' and sympathy with Poland.[60]

Around 140 witchcraft trials took place in seventeenth-century Estonia, with men being accused of witchcraft almost twice as often as women. This seems to have been the pattern in Finnic cultures; in Finland and Sápmi, similarly, it was almost always men who were accused of witchcraft.[61] William Monter suggested this may have been caused by the linking of witchcraft with shamanism, which was a largely male activity.[62] Even under torture, Estonian suspects scarcely ever mentioned pacts with the devil or flights to the Sabbath,

[57] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 281.
[58] Valk, 'Christianization and Changes in Faith', pp. 36–55.
[59] Petts, *Pagan and Christian*, pp. 38–40.
[60] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 283. [61] Ruben, 'Witchcraft', pp. 35–89.
[62] Monter, 'Scandinavian Witchcraft', p. 426.

speaking instead of sorcerers, spirits, and werewolves.[63] This was presumably because the demonology of mainstream European witch-hunting was entirely outside their conceptual world. While there were pagan elements in Estonian witch trials, however, it would be an exaggeration to say that Estonians were persecuted as witches because they were pagans. For instance, Aarne Ruben has argued that Pyrsa Martt, accused of witchcraft at Pärnu in 1641–2, may have sent devils to torment and kill Count Christian von Thurn because the latter strayed into a sacred forest or *hiis*.[64] Similarly, Ivar Paulson took the view that Haiki Jan, from Kanep parish, who was put on trial on 13 August 1632, may have made a sacrifice to thunder.[65]

A cult of thunder (or of a god of thunder, if such a distinction can be made) seems to have been a feature of pre-Christian Estonian religion. In 1644 Johann Gutslaff, pastor of Urvaste parish in Võrumaa, recorded a prayer to thunder, intended to avert storms that might destroy crops, that was recounted to him by the 'thunder priest' Vihtla Jürgen:

> Take it, thunder, we offer the ox with two horns and four hooves as a prayer, for plowing, for sowing; [let] the straw [be] copper, the kernels gold! Push the black clouds elsewhere, over the big marsh, the high wilderness, the wide forest; [let] the sweet weather, the honey air [stay] with us, the ploughman and sower! Holy thunder, protect our field – good straw below and good ears above and good kernels inside![66]

[63] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 282. [64] Ruben, 'Witchcraft', p. 81.
[65] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 124.
[66] Quoted in Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 123.

We should treat with some caution, however, Paulson's suggestion that ritual sex was part of the placation of the thunder god Ukko in hilltop rituals recorded by seventeenth-century authors.[67] Accusations of sexual immorality at unauthorised festive gatherings were a commonplace of pastoral writing and a means of further demonising pre-Christian practices.

By 1650 the Castellan's Court of Tallinn was adopting a more nuanced approach than simply arresting idolaters for witchcraft, distinguishing five separate offences of varying severity within the crime of witchcraft. While those who made pacts with the devil were to be burnt to death, pre-Christian practices merited the least attention; those who engaged in 'superstitions' were to be imprisoned and admonished by a pastor.[68] However, while the methods of bewitchment noted in trial records from Livonia belong to the world of popular magic and folklore, it is less clear that they have any special connection with pre-Christian religion. An exception is the importance of werewolves in Livonian witch trials. Several people confessed that they put on a wolfskin and transformed into a wolf, killing animals, and then hid their wolfskins under stones. In 1636 a woman from Kurna in Estonia confessed that an old woman had led her into the woods, fed her sweet roots, and turned her into a werewolf so they could hunt together.[69] Similarly, Estonians also believed in the possibility of people transforming themselves into bears.[70]

[67] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 128.
[68] Madar, 'Estonia I', pp. 264–5. [69] Madar, 'Estonia I', p. 271.
[70] Madar, 'Estonia I', p. 272.

Pre-Christian practices apparently remained strong at the end of the seventeenth century. In 1698, during the Great Northern War, peasants at Lääne-Nigula had to be threatened with dispersal by cavalry to stop them sacrificing at their traditional hill,[71] and the Lutheran pastor Christian Kelch recorded in the 1690s that the peasants continued to offer beer, milk, and food at a specific place in their houses and threw offerings into wells to bring rain.[72] In 1680 a figure of 'Metsik' was carried through the fields in Saaremaa in order to ensure fertility; this was about thirty inches long with a beard and hair made from flax, a wooden sword, and an oversized phallus. 'Metsik' (whose name meant 'the wild one' or 'the one from the forest') was then taken back to the forest and placed in a tree, perhaps signifying the priority of the forest and its deities as the source of fertility and sacred power.[73]

Prussia: Dying Embers

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the Duchy of Prussia – the former Ordensstaat of the Teutonic Knights – was an autonomous Lutheran realm under Polish suzerainty, ruled by the Hohenzollern descendants of the last Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, Duke Albert. In 1618, however, the Prussian Hohenzollerns died out in the male line, allowing their Hohenzollern cousins the Electors of Brandenburg to unite Brandenburg and Prussia in dynastic union – the beginnings of a new entity

[71] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 283.
[72] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 105.
[73] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 111.

that would eventually become the kingdom of Prussia. In 1657 Prussia gained its independence from Polish suzerainty and Brandenburg–Prussia emerged as a major player in the geopolitics of east-central Europe. The University of Königsberg (the Albertina) was a major centre of learning in the region, and the key figures in the antiquarian investigation of Prussian religion in the seventeenth century were Christoph Hartknoch (1644–1687) and Matthäus Prätorius (c. 1635–c. 1704), both of whom were Lutherans (although Prätorius converted to Catholicism in 1701).

Prätorius's German-language book *Deliciae Prussicae* ('Delights of Prussia') was not published in its entirety until the nineteenth century,[74] and it was therefore Hartknoch's *Selectae dissertationes historicae de variis rebus Prussicis* ('Select Historical Treatises on Various Prussian Matters', 1679), which Hartknoch also published in a German version, that came to influence learned understandings of Prussian religion the most. Hartknoch included chapters 'On the Places Destined for Divine Worship among the Old Prussians',[75] 'On the Three Greater Gods of the Old Prussians, Percunus, Picollo and Potrimpus',[76] 'On Gods of the Second and Third Orders',[77] 'On the Priests of the Old Prussians',[78] 'On the Cult of the Gods among the Old Prussians',[79] and 'On the Festival Days of the Old Prussians',[80] as well as chapters on Prussian marriage

[74] Prätorius (ed. Pierson), *Deliciae Prussicae*.
[75] Hartknoch, *Selectae dissertationes*, pp. 109–22.
[76] Hartknoch, *Selectae dissertationes*, pp. 123–36.
[77] Hartknoch, *Selectae dissertationes*, pp. 136–45.
[78] Hartknoch, *Selectae dissertationes*, pp. 146–56.
[79] Hartknoch, *Selectae dissertationes*, pp. 156–67.
[80] Hartknoch, *Selectae dissertationes*, pp. 168–79.

and funeral rites.[81] Hartknoch believed that 'Sarmatian Europe' (eastern Europe) had originally been evangelised by St Andrew the apostle, but later fell back into idolatry.[82] While Hartknoch treated the religion of the Old Prussians primarily as a thing of the past and drew heavily on earlier authors such as Peter of Duisburg, Simon Grunau, the Maleckis, and Erasmus Stella, he called particular attention to the fact that the Prussians still buried their dead with vessels of mead or beer.[83]

The work of Hartknoch and Prätorius reflected the mixed ethnic composition of Ducal Prussia; not only did the customs of the German-speaking elite and urban population of towns like Königsberg differ from those of the peasants, but the peasants themselves included Prussians, Sudovians, Nadruvians, and Lithuanians in the area of 'Lithuania Minor' (the easternmost part of Ducal Prussia, with a finger of land running up what is now the coast of Lithuania to the port of Klaipėda). Some of what Prätorius recorded therefore applies to Lithuanians rather than to Prussians, but he is usually considered a valuable source of information on pre-Christian Baltic religion in general. The German historian Michael Brauer has argued that the early modern Prussians were not pagans at all and that German-speaking commentators mistook Prussian festive culture for pre-Christian rites.[84] It is certainly true that Prätorius sometimes invented non-existent pre-Christian Baltic cults by misinterpreting the evidence. For example, the cult of the

[81] Hartknoch, *Selectae dissertationes*, pp. 179–87, 187–200.
[82] Hartknoch, *Selectae dissertationes*, p. 202.
[83] Hartknoch, *Selectae dissertationes*, p. 194.
[84] Brauer, 'Erfindung oder Entdeckung?', pp. 185–216.

owl deity Iwullis was in all likelihood little more than a series of superstitions connected with eagle-owls; Prätorius assumed, perhaps, that if superstitions existed there must have been a pagan cult behind them[85] – a kind of seventeenth-century version of the twentieth-century 'pagans under the bed' mentality.

Although his eagerness to make an exhaustive record of gods led Prätorius into reliance on unreliable sources such as Simon Grunau, he also admitted that Prussian religion was essentially animistic, and indeed totemistic, suggesting that there were almost as many religions as there were unchristianised Prussians:

> every man in the mentioned Prussian lands had his own godling, worshipped as his personal god. Some of them worshipped Sun, others Moon, still others stars. Similarly some people took as sacred domestic animals, grass snakes, frogs or thunder. Others took as sacred forests, still others in turn waters … But grass snakes and owls themselves were not sacred and it was necessary to consecrate them. And not only a whole region, but every individual person could choose, what match with gods and what to take for sacred, e.g. one took for sacred Sun, another Moon, a third stars, that one elk, this one white horses, that one black horses.[86]

Prätorius recorded the continuity of the cult of Curche, the earliest recorded of all Baltic deities who received a mention in a treaty concluded between the Prussians and the Teutonic Order on 7 February 1249. Here the Prussians undertook not to sacrifice to effigies of Curche they carved once a year. Curche was taken up by Simon Grunau in the 1520s, who reported that Curche

[85] *LBM*, pp. 89–90. [86] Quoted in *LBM*, p. 240.

was a god of food borrowed by the Prussians from the Masurians. Prätorius noted the continued significance of a god named Gurcho among the Samogitians:

> And it was similar with *Gurcho* or *Gurklio*, who was often worshipped with fish bones and [animal] bones, as it is still common among some Samogitians and their neighbours to burn the bones of the meat that was eaten to worship the god and to hide or bury the ashes to prevent witches or sorcerers from using them … Next to the hearth, the first fruits, drinks and other sacrifices were burned, as it was the custom to sacrifice to Gurcho (who was called by a different name at these occasions) by throwing some food in the corner of the house and pouring drinks there. All that was usually eaten afterwards by rats and other vermin.[87]

Rimantas Balsys argued that Prätorius built on the work of Jan Łasicki by assigning functions to gods mentioned – but not described in any detail – by Łasicki; but Prätorius generally did this on the basis of speculation rather than further ethnographic research. Thus, for example, Prätorius hypothesised a god of birch trees, Biržulis, in spite of the fact that there is no evidence the Balts worshipped gods of specific trees.[88] However, Prätorius also recorded evidence of creole religion in Prussia, such as the mingling of libations to God, the Virgin Mary, and the Baltic goddess Laimė after the birth of a child among the Nadruvians.[89]

Prätorius offered a glimpse of the remnants of pre-Christian Prussian religion in the last phase of its

[87] Quoted in *LBM*, pp. 105–6.
[88] Balsys, *Lietuvių ir prūsų dievai*, pp. 349, 390.
[89] Prätorius (ed. Pierson), *Deliciae Prussicae*, pp. 95–6.

existence; for instance, on one occasion he encountered an old man who informed him that many people in Nadruvia worshipped sacred trees containing a sacred fire. Prätorius asked him if these trees sheltered Perkūnas, and the man eventually replied that '*Perkunus* and *Pykullis* rule over them, and one should greatly fear all gods and not take away what belongs to them.' When Prätorius asked if Pykullis was a god, the man seemed not to know, only shrugging his shoulders and saying, 'He does what he wants.' Prätorius wondered if Pykullis was one and the same as Velnias, the devil: 'Yes,' the man replied, 'it is he, because he is free to do what he wants.'[90] This exchange suggests that, by the late seventeenth century, practitioners of pre-Christian cults were often uncertain of the identity of the gods they worshipped and what sustained cults was the fear of *not* worshipping the god – a kind of residual ritual taboo.

Prätorius even witnessed some rites at first hand, recording that he saw *wejones* (sorcerers claiming to control the wind) at Nybudžiai in October 1648: 'During wildfire it is possible to watch with astonishment, how easily the direction of the wind can be changed.' He reported that some *wejones* could also enchant fire, invoking 'the fire-angel' (perhaps *aitvaras*): 'When they address by name the fire-angel, they can command him not to do damage.'[91] Prätorius displayed the antiquarian spirit in his enthusiasm for exhaustive catalogues – such as two chapters dedicated to different types of sorcery and sorcerers found among the Prussians and Lithuanians.[92] However, as with deities, so with types of magical practitioner this antiquarian

[90] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 246. [91] *LBM*, p. 208.
[92] Prätorius (ed. Pierson), *Deliciae Prussicae*, pp. 37–48.

'sorting-mania' could lead ethnographers astray, since it inclined them to think of every magical practice as distinct and performed by a different category of specialists, which led to a fragmented portrayal of Prussian culture.

Unlike the other unchristianised peoples discussed in this book, the Prussians were entirely assimilated into the German-speaking population of Prussia by the end of the seventeenth century, to the point that the Prussian language became extinct. The last Prussian-speakers may have succumbed to plague and famine in the period 1709–11, although the Germanised descendants of native Prussians lived in east Prussia until 1945. At that point the entire German-speaking population (as well as the Lithuanian-speaking population of Lithuania Minor) was killed, expelled, or forced to flee by the invading Red Army and replaced by Russian-speakers. Kaliningrad Oblast, as it is now known, remains an exclave of the Russian Federation surrounded by the territories of Poland and Lithuania.[93]

Latvia: Werewolves and Witches, Jesuits and Lutherans

For most of the seventeenth century, the territory of what is today Latvia was divided into three main jurisdictions. The city of Riga and its hinterland was part of Swedish Livonia from 1621, while the western and central part of the country constituted the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia under the rule of the Kettler family, and ultimately subject to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

[93] On the peculiar status of the Kaliningrad Oblast see Rwykin, 'Odd Entity', pp. 209–16.

Meanwhile the east of Latvia (Latgale) was jointly ruled from Daugavpils by Poland and Lithuania as the Inflanty Voivodeship. The religious makeup of Latvia was correspondingly complex; Riga was under Catholic rule between 1582 and 1621 but then became a Swedish Lutheran city, while the Duchy of Courland was Lutheran in spite of forming part of the Catholic Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth; the Inflanty Voivodeship, meanwhile, was theoretically Catholic but many of its people remained unchristianised. Both Catholic and Lutheran missionaries left a record of Latvian pre-Christian religion, most notably the Jesuits of Riga's short-lived Jesuit college, which was closed by the Swedes in 1621.

Many of these Jesuit journeys were made into the inaccessible territory of Latgale, which was marshy and heavily forested. Joannes Stribingius, visiting the area of Rēzekne and Ludza in 1606, reported that it was only 'with labour and weariness' that the community's ninety-year-old *popus* ('priest') could be made to confess he had long led pagan rites, and when the Jesuits asked the people to reject idolatry they replied 'that their ancestors had thus done, and thus taught them; it was fitting, therefore, that they should trust in them like the old man'.[94] However, this turned out to be not so much a stubborn rejection of Christianity as a last resort of people without pastoral provision. As one of the old men who assisted the *popus* confessed,

> Being wretched and destitute of all the Word of God and of priests (as we understood that the faithful had in other places),

[94] *BRMR*, p. 124.

we tried to seek help in our necessities; and seeing that we heard that our ancestors had worshipped certain trees, and, offering them certain gifts, they were helped and freed from their infirmities, and enriched with all goods, we now tried to do the same, not wanting to be reduced to nothing.[95]

This intriguing testimony, if it is reliable, suggests that the Latgalians underwent Christianisation but then *reverted* to or revived a half-understood pre-Christian religion because they had no priests and no churches, and because trees and groves were near at hand as potential sites of worship. The religion of the Latgalians was thus a kind of re-enactment of what they thought their ancestors might have done, motivated by pastoral crisis, rather than a continuous tradition from the pre-Christian era. Furthermore, the people retained elements of Christianity: the *popus* not only led rites of sacrifice to sacred trees but also baptised the children of the community.[96] In 1608, Jesuits from the Jesuit college in Riga encountered a similar situation where a seventy-year-old man was baptising children, but used the incorrect formula 'Receive the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'[97] The rarity of contact with priests imbued any object a priest had blessed with magical significance, and in 1615 the Riga Jesuits reported that 'as many of the Latvians as the Estonians put their faith in blessed created things, which they obtained from their ancestors at around the time of their conversion from their hereditary paganism', giving the example of the blessed boats and blessed nets used by fishermen.[98]

[95] *BRMR*, p. 124. [96] *BRMR*, p. 126. [97] *BRMR*, p. 137.
[98] *BRMR*, p. 160.

Nevertheless, some rites remained overtly pagan. Stribingius reported that people went into the forests to sacrifice 'a black bull, a black hen, a black suckling pig to the god of fields and grain whom they call *Dewing Cereklicing*, together with several tuns of beer, sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on how cheerful the god *Cerekling* makes them'. The sacrifices were followed by dancing around the trees.[99] A few years later, in 1618, Jesuit missionaries made a similar report about a god they called Cerroklis: 'Apart from other sacred things, they honour trees. They offer to them their gifts: men a black rooster under an oak tree, women a black hen under a linden tree. They also sacrifice the first bit of every meal and first draught of every drink to a god called *Cerroklis*'.[100]

Stribingius also reported that Latvians made offerings to a god of horses: 'To the god of horses whom they call *Devinį ūšinįe* every one of them individually sacrifices two shillings, two loaves of bread and a piece of fat by throwing them into the fire.'[101] Tree worship sometimes involved climbing into natural holes inside or in the root systems of trees while praying for health[102] – a practice not so very different from passing sick children through split ash trees in Britain, for example.

In contrast to Lithuania, where the Jesuits treated sorcery and witchcraft primarily as pastoral issues to be dealt with in the confessional, the Jesuits in Livonia found themselves involved in judicial proceedings against accused witches by hearing the confessions of people

[99] *BRMR*, pp. 124–5. [100] *BRMR*, p. 172; *LBM*, p. 54.
[101] *BRMR*, p. 124. [102] *BRMR*, p. 207.

awaiting trial or execution. Elements of pre-Christian religion occasionally surface in witchcraft proceedings from Latvia; in 1699, for example, a woman was accused of witchcraft for making a goat meat broth and then pouring it out at a crossroads with the incantation, 'Mother of Path should take the Mother of Lying [i.e. illness] far away to Russia',[103] which seems to be a fairly early reference to one of the many divine 'mothers' recorded in Latvian popular belief in the nineteenth century. However, the confessions received by the Riga Jesuits were not significantly different from the testimonies of women and men accused of witchcraft elsewhere in Europe, involving gatherings of witches for the Sabbath in order to worship the devil and receive instructions from him. According to one confession, witches gathered in Riga's Lutheran cathedral on Christmas night in 1612, where the devil appeared dressed as a Lutheran clergyman but addressed the assembled witches in the Latvian language – a strange combination of the simultaneous demonisation of Lutheranism and the unchristianised Latvian peasantry.[104]

In addition to witches, the Jesuits in Latvia also seem to have encountered people who confessed to being werewolves (or something similar). As the Riga Jesuits recorded in 1619, 'There were found … not a few men who, fleeing in the manner of wild beasts into the woods, were carried with a wild force into the woods and groves, when any of them had given in to the strict bonds of liberty.' The Jesuits prescribed blessed bread and holy water.[105] Paul Einhorn noted that there were two opinions on werewolves, with some holding that the person who became a werewolf

[103] *LBM*, p. 53. [104] *BRMR*, p. 152. [105] *BRMR*, p. 177.

projected their soul into the body of a wolf and others that people actually transformed themselves into wolves.[106] The most famous werewolf case from seventeenth-century Latvia, that of 'Old Thiess' of Kaltenbrun, which is the focus of a book by Carlo Ginsburg and Bruce Lincoln, hinged in part on the apparently pagan nature of one of the charms used by Thiess, who saw himself as 'God's werewolf' and assumed his werewolf identity in his work as a local healer. Thiess's invocation 'Sun and moon go over the sea' in several of his charms invoked celestial bodies like deities and not God, leading to Thiess's sentence of flogging and banishment.[107]

The Jesuits were by no means the only missionaries recording pre-Christian traditions in Latvia; the Lutheran missionary Paul Einhorn (d. 1655) made similarly valuable records, primarily from Courland. Einhorn published his *Widerlegung der Abgötterei und Aberglaubens* ('Rebuttal of Idolatry and Superstition') in 1627, followed by *Reformatio gentis Letticae in Ducatu Curlandiae* ('The Reformation of the Latvian People in the Duchy of Courland') in 1636. Einhorn was contemptuous of Latvian Christianity, such as it was, describing the Latvians as *semi-Christiani* and *ethnico-Christiani* – 'ethnic Christians' – for whom their inherited traditions mattered a great deal more than the faith.[108] In *Reformatio gentis Letticae*, Einhorn set out his manifesto for the conversion of the Latvians from idolatry, blaming a famine in 1601 on God's wrath against idolaters. Unlike the Jesuits,

[106] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 191.
[107] Ginsburg and Lincoln, *Old Thiess*, p. 28.
[108] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 185.

who concentrated on confession, exorcism, and giving people blessed objects like the Agnus Dei (a blessed wax image of the Lamb of God), Einhorn emphasised the need for preachers who would preach 'most simply, from the word of God, for the captivation of their idiot hearers, that they should avoid idolatry and receive the Christian religion with their whole heart'.[109] In this way, Einhorn believed, 'the relics of the vanities of the gentiles will be dissipated by the grace of God, and will be completely exterminated'.[110] In 1649, Einhorn's masterpiece, *Historia Lettica* ('History of Latvia') provided the first history of the Latvian people, with several chapters devoted to the Latvians' pre-Christian religion,[111] and exemplified the early modern paradox of antiquarians dedicated to destroying the object of their study.

Lithuania and Samogitia: The Long Battle against Idolatry

The first half of the seventeenth century was a fairly stable period for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, united with Poland in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth under an elected grand duke. The Lithuanian nobility was by this time mostly polonised, although religious rifts between the Catholic and Calvinist nobility rumbled on. However, the Counter-Reformation was in full swing and was led by the Jesuits of Vilnius and

[109] Einhorn, *Reformatio gentis Letticae*, sig. Bv. In spite of its Latin title Einhorn's book is in German, apart from its Latin preface.

[110] Einhorn, *Reformatio gentis Letticae*, sig. B[i]r.

[111] Einhorn, *Historia Lettica*, pp. 14–18 (Latvian religion), pp. 18–20 (Latvian festivals), pp. 49–53 (funerals and the cult of the dead).

other colleges, who travelled on mission into the remote countryside every summer in an effort to normalise the status of Lithuanian Catholicism. However, the size of the country and the absence of a functioning parish structure made the mission a rather thankless task, and by all accounts the Christianisation of the peasantry was as much of a challenge for the Lithuanian church at the end of the century as it had been at the start. However, one reason for this may have been the collapse of both ecclesiastical and civil authority in the middle years of the century as Lithuania suffered 'The Deluge' – a devastating invasion by Russian and Swedish troops. The second half of the seventeenth century was characterised by tentative recovery, but the 'golden age' of the Grand Duchy's capacity to dominate east-central Europe had passed.

In 1600 the Jesuit college in Vilnius reported that forty-seven missions had been sent out into the countryside, lasting between a day and a week. These resulted in 1,700 confessions, the revival of abandoned fonts and the baptism of many infants, children, and adults, as well as the regularisation of marriages contracted without Christian rites. The Jesuits reported the sacrifice of a ram, suspiciously similar to the goat sacrifice described by Jan and Hieronim Malecki in their book about the Prussians and Sudovians, suggesting they may have lifted the details from the book rather than eyewitness testimony. They also reported women sacrificing chickens and the secret worship of stones called *deyues* in granaries, to which old women sacrificed a black sow. Old women also sacrificed chickens at riverbanks in order to ensure a safe crossing, while newborn children were dipped in rivers in thanks

for the gods for their safe birth. According to the Jesuits, when the people saw the priests and students overturn and mock the *deyues* they joined in the desecration, astonished that they suffered no retribution from the gods.[112] Another missionary travelling through Samogitia the following year reported something similar after destroying shrines in granaries, when he was followed by children smashing vessels used for libations shouting 'Truly, worthless and stupid gods!'[113]

In the fourth century, Maximus of Turin had denounced the covert worship of pagan gods in storehouses and granaries in northern Italy and Gaul,[114] and granaries remained a focus of folk belief concerning the activity of fairy-like beings in England into the Middle Ages.[115] The missions in seventeenth-century Lithuania usually involved the cutting down of sacred trees,[116] the purification of granary shrines with holy water, and the setting up of crosses.[117] The feeding of ancestors at banquets held at burial sites was a recurrent complaint. Most of the cults, such as the worship of Dimstipatis and Pagyrnis, and the feeding of snakes, were domestic (and, to some extent, secret) in nature.[118] However, some religious practices were focussed on churches; a Vilnius synod held in 1602 reported that people threw chickens and other offerings onto the altars of churches on the church's patronal feast,[119] while another report noted that people brought offerings to sacred groves and trees at Easter

[112] *BRMR*, pp. 102–4. [113] *BRMR*, p. 108.
[114] Filotas, *Pagan Survivals*, p. 85.
[115] Young, *Twilight of the Godlings*, p. 267. [116] *BRMR*, p. 107.
[117] *BRMR*, p. 110. [118] *BRMR*, p. 115. [119] *BRMR*, p. 113.

and Michaelmas,[120] suggesting a complete merging of pre-Christian belief with half-understood Christianity. Similarly, the belief that no work should be done on the twelfth day of Christmas, condemned by the Jesuits in 1605, was not uncommon elsewhere in Christian Europe (although sometimes associated with Holy Innocents' Day rather than Epiphany).[121]

Much of the Jesuits' work involved exorcisms. On one occasion in 1605, the priests exorcised a house where both the people and horses were plagued by spirits, but the old men of the household were concerned the spirits of the dead had been offended by the exorcism; they therefore made two holes in a beam and concealed two eggs as offerings to 'the god of the earth' and 'the guardian of the dead'. These were discovered by the Jesuits, who smashed the eggs and exorcised the beam with holy water.[122] As in Latvia, the role of the *popus* was a matter of concern; in 1609 the Jesuits of Nyazvizh complained of 'the inveterate negligence of the *popi*, who discharge almost the duties of priests'.[123] The missionaries were still discovering new deities worshipped by the common people in the seventeenth century, such as Beaukuris, 'guard of the crop', first recorded in 1611.[124] But there were some successes; a 1612 visitation of Rietavas proudly recorded that the clergy had persuaded people to bury their dead in the churchyard and not in the countryside.[125]

In contrast to the Jesuit annual letters, seventeenth-century visitations of the diocese of Vilnius undoubtedly

[120] *BRMR*, p. 124. [121] *BRMR*, p. 119. [122] *BRMR*, p. 118.
[123] *BRMR*, p. 139. [124] *BRMR*, p. 147; *LBM*, p. 42.
[125] *BRMR*, p. 150.

played down the significance of pre-Christian religious practices. The 1605 visitation merely alluded to 'superstitious people', but focussed primarily on the ignorance of the clergy and the presence of 'heretics' (Calvinists) and Orthodox.[126] The 1622 visitation made mention of the work of the Jesuits in learning the local language and teaching the faith to 'rude country-dwellers', implying ignorance of it.[127] The absence of any mention of unchristianised people from these visitations, when Calvinists, Orthodox Christians, Jews, and Tatars are frequently mentioned, is probably down to the fact that unchristianised Lithuanian-speakers were deemed to be Latin rite Catholics (however tenuously). Indeed, the Lithuanians agreed; as a Jesuit annual letter reported in 1602, the Lithuanians 'were found to have done nothing other than seized upon the name of Catholic'.[128]

In 1625 the bishop of Samogitia made a visitation of his diocese which was greatly concerned with the problem of 'heresy' (Calvinism) but made no mention of pagan practices at all; the bishop simply noted that on account of the shortage of clergy 'so many myriads of children die without baptism … the rest live without the nourishment of the Word of God and the sacraments'.[129] The 1639 visitation described the population of Samogitia as good Catholics,[130] although since 'many old men and aged persons' were baptised during the visitation, and several were delivered from 'vexations of incubi and demons' by confession, this seems not entirely to have been the case.[131] In the same year the missionary Jerzy Szawinski reported that

[126] *Relationes*, p. 30. [127] *Relationes*, p. 54. [128] *BRMR*, p. 112.
[129] *Relationes*, p. 243. [130] *Relationes*, p. 252. [131] *Relationes*, p. 254.

although the worship of demons is now rare, obscuring the divine glory in the form of snakes, groves and by the vanities of other idols, yet it flourishes by blindness and tricks of the devil in every people from their first origin, and there are still some relics of superstitions which they retain, turning the people to the blind darkness of errors on account of the lack of interpreters of sacred doctrine.

Szawinski went on to enumerate the veneration of *žeminės* (earth spirits), *laukinės* (field spirits), *pagirnės* (domestic spirits) living under rocks, and *aitvarai*,

which are truly nothing other than incubi, evil spirits, sometimes appearing in human form, and many in a foul form, cockerels flying in the woods or having the raised feathers of a peacock. If sparks of fire seem to flash from the tail, it is taken sadly as a sign that it will bring neither money nor grain to the worshipper. But if it should appear somewhat dark and obscure, it is thought to return burdened with grain and coins at the rejoicing of the simple people. I have often myself seen it in this form flying late at night, and having made the sign of the cross, I averted it – it suddenly disappeared or plunged itself into pools. Indeed, I have also uncovered the thefts of the same, devastating barns, granaries and stores of food.[132]

Szawinski interpreted the festival of Ilgės in Samogitia, and Rudenės in Lithuania, as an attempt to placate these spirits. He noted that the spirits often burnt down people's houses when they were neglected, but that people could be liberated from them by confession – which perhaps explains the reference to people being delivered from demons by confession in the visitation of the diocese.[133] In one respect, however, Szawinski noted that the

[132] *Relationes*, p. 266. [133] *Relationes*, pp. 266–7.

Samogitians displayed exemplary piety: they treated priests with great reverence and genuflected or even prostrated themselves when they approached. Similarly, they showed great veneration at the elevation of the host during mass and beat their chests so hard that the noise was alarming to foreign visitors to Vilnius Cathedral.[134]

This reverence for priests, and for the consecrated host, is perhaps what we might expect to find in a society undergoing religious creolisation; it is, after all, in priests and in the consecrated host that Catholicism teaches that sacred power resides, and therefore the Samogitians' interest in these things could be interpreted as an indication of their interest in sources of sacred power rather than in the Christian faith per se. Nevertheless, the old ways were fading; Szawinski reported that recent missions had finally suppressed the worship of snakes.[135] But overall he seems to have felt overwhelmed by the task of bringing Samogitia to faith: 'For the lands are infinite, and the thousands of souls uncountable, where witchcrafts, sorceries, and other tricks of demons are many.'[136] In 1666 the Jesuits reported that only one in a hundred people had heard of the Incarnation or the Trinity, although they were sacrificing and feeding the ancestors at Easter, Pentecost, Christmas, All Saints' Day, and All Souls' Day. They were terrified of the sign of the cross, however, believing it to be a way of summoning the devil (perhaps a garbled understanding of exorcism?).[137]

The phenomenon of 'found cults' that conferred a much older Christian identity on a recently converted

[134] *Relationes*, p. 272. [135] *Relationes*, p. 273. [136] *Relationes*, p. 275.
[137] *BRMR*, p. 218.

territory, like the Virgin of Candelaria in Tenerife, was not wholly absent from Lithuania. A 1646 visitation of the diocese of Vilnius noted that an ancient image of Christ found in the River Nemunas was being venerated at Zapyškis, where according to tradition the church was built on the site of a pagan temple.[138] However, the 1646 visitation was not specific about pre-Christian practices, reporting only that some 'remain ignorant of religion and of the Christian faith'.[139] Seventeenth-century visitations of the Lithuanian dioceses tended to concentrate on administrative matters and on formal canonical compliance, while detailed reports on idolatry and the errors of popular religion were left to missionaries.

In 1654 a new Jesuit college was founded at Pašiausė between Šiauliai and Panevėžys, on the border between Samogitia and the rest of Lithuania. The following year, the Grand Duchy was invaded and devastated by both Sweden and Muscovy; Vilnius fell to the Russians in 1656, while Samogitia was occupied by the Swedes. The missions of the Jesuit college in Vilnius to rural areas came to an end, but the Pašiausė college managed to carry on, reporting on missions in 1657 and 1658.[140] Occasionally we hear the voices of the Lithuanians themselves in these missionary records. In 1640 the Jesuits encountered a fifty-year-old man who declared that 'This alone appears clear to the clergy and nobility, that for us the earth must be worshipped forever.'[141] At times the missionaries seem to have compromised with local beliefs and set themselves up in direct competition with

[138] *Relationes*, p. 286. [139] *Relationes*, p. 282. [140] *BRMR*, p. 201.
[141] *BRMR*, p. 198.

traditional practices. In 1657 the Jesuit Jakub Paszkiewicz found people receiving magical herbs from sorcerers; he dealt with this by distributing blessed rue and sage on the Feast of the Assumption, 'and many used these herbs as a very efficacious medicine against all illnesses'.[142]

A similarly creative compromise with pre-existing traditions occurred at Gelvonai in 1670, when the archbishop of Gniezno decided that a church could be built on the site of a rock venerated by local people which contained the apparent imprints of two feet. In an inquisition held on the question of whether devotion at the miraculous rock should be encouraged or forbidden, it was noted that the rock was covered by a roof and featured a crucifix with the instruments of the passion. At the same time, however, the rock was frequented by 'Jews, Scythians, and heretics' and was a site of 'drinking, lascivious dances, fights, woundings, murders, rapes of women and other inconveniences'. Whether the rock had been a site of pre-Christian veneration before it was Christianised is unclear, but it seems highly likely; the glacial erratics that litter the Lithuanian landscape drew the attention of ancient people and became the focus of pre-Christian worship that continued as late as the eighteenth century.[143]

The inquisition heard numerous testimonies of miracles worked at the rock of Gelvonai, including from a woman named Catharina Alexandrowa Kudlubowska who claimed to have seen the Virgin Mary standing on

[142] *BRMR*, p. 214.

[143] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, pp. 297–300; Vaitkevičius, *Studies into the Balts' Sacred Places*, pp. 21–37.

it – the implication was, therefore, that the footprints were those of the Virgin – at least for those who identified as Christians.[144] In the end, the archbishop compromised by insisting the unacceptable practices at the site be banned and permitting a church to be built over the rock.[145] The Gelvonai process has certain parallels with the foundation of the celebrated Marian shrine at Šiluva in 1608 after shepherds witnessed the Virgin Mary standing on a rock. The rock was later incorporated into a chapel on the site of the apparition (Plate 14). However, there is insufficient unambiguous information about the origins of the cult of Our Lady of Šiluva to be certain that it represents the Christianisation of a pre-Christian sacred rock.[146]

While some pre-Christian religious practices were persecuted as witchcraft in both Sápmi and Livonia, this was not the case in Lithuania. A diverse range of magical practices existed in Lithuanian culture, with practitioners denoted by several different terms.[147] Prätorius noted over twenty different kinds of magicians among the Lithuanians, although most of these seem to have been practitioners of popular forms of divination rather than sorcery.[148] Lithuania's very mixed population also meant that a range of different beliefs existed about witchcraft. The Grand Duchy's Orthodox and Greek Catholic population, for example, held views of witches similar to those

[144] On the tradition of 'footprints' on Baltic sacred rocks see Vaitkevičius, *Studies into the Balts' Sacred Places*, pp. 25–7.
[145] *BRMR*, pp. 221–8.
[146] On the origins of Šiluva see Stankevičienė, 'The Image of the Blessed Virgin Mary', pp. 19–22.
[147] Gimževskienė, 'Raganos ir burtininkai', p. 27.
[148] Prätorius (ed. Pierson), *Deliciae Prussicae*, pp. 41–6.

that prevailed in neighbouring Muscovy, where there was a comparatively weak tradition of witch-hunting.[149] The figure of the *ragana* remained an ambivalent one in Lithuanian folklore, casting the evil eye but also helping neighbours with herbal remedies,[150] but Lithuanian folk belief in witchcraft did not lend itself to intense fear of supernatural harm.

Witchcraft (*raganavimas*) was apparently named after the goddess Ragana, portrayed in later folklore as a hideous old woman embodying dearth, barrenness, and destruction, but whose name may mean 'she who sees into the future'.[151] In the sixteenth century Jan Łasicki had described Ragaina only as a goddess of the forest,[152] and in 1619 the Jesuits noted that the Lithuanians considered *ragana* a word that should not be spoken.[153] Statutes against witchcraft were promulgated in the Grand Duchy in 1566 and 1588,[154] and the Jesuits routinely linked sorcery to lingering paganism, but this did not necessarily translate to judicial consequences. Indeed, it is difficult to identify a Lithuanian witch trial that contains any specific reference to pre-Christian beliefs that are recognisably different from the popular religion and popular magic practised in any other European nation.

Malgorzata Pilaszek's analysis of Lithuanian witchcraft trials revealed a peak in the 1630s, with sustained judicial

[149] Ryan, 'Witchcraft Hysteria', pp. 77–8; Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, pp. 408–34.
[150] Klimka, 'Senosios baltų mitologijos', p. 93; *LBM*, p. 165.
[151] Greimas, *Of Gods and Men*, p. 85; Zujienė, 'Witchcraft Court Cases', pp. 81–3.
[152] *PEMB*, p. 143. [153] *BRMR*, p. 174.
[154] Ryan, 'Witchcraft Hysteria', p. 77.

interest in witchcraft to the end of the seventeenth century, while trials declined from the early eighteenth century onwards. A quarter of trials ended with a sentence of death by burning. Pilaszek argued that the judicial and social pattern of trials in Lithuania was comparable to Estonia and Finland,[155] but the absence of references to werewolves and other pre-Christian beliefs in Lithuanian witch trials is notable. Nevertheless, the Jesuits sometimes found themselves involved in witch trials; in 1666 a drought in northern Samogitia was blamed on witches, who were accused of making clouds full of rain pass overhead without falling. The Jesuits managed to reconcile the accused women to the church, 'who burned while invoking the most holy names of Jesus and Mary'.[156] Ultimately, the church in Lithuania seems to have regarded sorcery and witchcraft as errors to be corrected by missionaries and ecclesiastical visitors via repentance and confession; *veneficas* are often mentioned in missionary reports from the seventeenth century, but not usually in reference to any judicial proceedings.

Crucially, most visitors to rural areas in Lithuania and Samogitia regarded the people there as superstitious Christians rather than as pagans. They were often baptised, after all – if unreliably, by elderly community leaders who took on this task, and therefore fulfilled the minimal requirement for people to be considered Christians. Furthermore, they were the subjects of a Christian ruler and came under the missionary purview of the Latin rite dioceses of the Grand Duchy. For the

[155] Pilaszek, 'Litewskie procesy czarownic', p. 35.
[156] *BRMR*, pp. 217–18.

Jesuits in Lithuania, pre-Christian beliefs and rites were 'frequent superstitions, the relics of ancient impiety'.[157] In 1616 the Italian Jesuit Giovanni Argenti reported that in Samogitia, the saving faith of Christ was 'intermixed with errors'.[158] Rarely were the people described as following a different religion, or as being pagans, although the bishop of Płock, Marcin Szyszkowski, identified Baltic religion as 'the Scythian faith' in 1616.[159] In 1645 the Sacred Congregation Propaganda Fide referred to 'gentiles' in Samogitia, Courland, and Semigallia.[160] But on the whole, before the 1670s missionaries portrayed the practices of the peasants as superstitious errors, the result of ignorance and stupidity, rather than as allegiance to an alien faith. At the level of canon law and moral theology, the offence the Lithuanians were confessing to missionary priests was superstition rather than apostasy.

In the 1670s, however, we find the first references to 'Old Lithuanians' (called by the Ruthenian term 'Stara Litwa' even in Latin documents) in visitation records.[161] Vaida Kamuntavičienė has argued that the Stara Litwa were not just Lithuanian peasants who creolised Christianity with pre-Christian beliefs, but people who did not attend church because they had no allegiance to Christianity.[162] Yet in spite of this new othering terminology, unchristianised Lithuanians were treated to all intents and purposes just like Lithuanians who had become good Catholics – other than being subject to

[157] *BRMR*, p. 174. [158] *BRMR*, p. 163. [159] *BRMR*, p. 167.
[160] *BRMR*, p. 207.
[161] See for example *BRMR*, p. 221 (inventory of the parish church of Jelna, 1670).
[162] Kamuntavičienė, 'Religious Faiths', p. 158.

the attentions of missionaries. In contrast to other territories, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth had no apparent agenda of converting its unchristianised minority and even the church hierarchy seems to have had no plan for doing so (it was left to the Jesuits). Indeed, the only way in which the state potentially impinged upon pre-Christian belief was in the area of witch trials, where the church actively challenged the state's authority anyway.

What was missing from the seventeenth-century Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in contrast to Sápmi, Livonia, and even Lithuania Minor, was antiquarian and ethnographic scholarship on pre-Christian religion. The Jesuits left valuable records of their missions, but for all their detail – especially about rituals – these stop short of trying to systematically understand or interpret Lithuanian religion. One reason for the absence of an ethnographic and antiquarian tradition was, perhaps, that such texts already existed from the sixteenth century. Another was the absence of any ethnic, linguistic, or cultural difference between Christianised and unchristianised Lithuanians; there was no cultural gap that ethnography needed to bridge and therefore a deficit of curiosity. But the main reason why an antiquarian tradition did not develop in the Grand Duchy was that it had a *historical* tradition. The Jesuit historian Wojciech Wijuk Kojałowicz's two-volume *Historiae Lituanae* ('Lithuanian Histories', 1650–69) established a historiography for the Grand Duchy based on written documents. Lithuania's unique historical position meant that it was not necessary for ethnographer-antiquarians to step into the place of historians by conferring a past on a non-literate people.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that commentators on unchristianised peoples in the seventeenth century were chiefly interested in two questions: whether the continued existence of pre-Christian religion represented a threat of witchcraft, and whether the customs and beliefs of unchristianised peoples were of antiquarian interest. Both of these questions were asked, of course, within the context of two overarching imperatives: the centralisation of the early modern state and ongoing efforts to convert Europe's remaining unchristianised peoples to the 'right' kind of Christianity. During the seventeenth century virtually everyone in northern Europe came into contact with Christianity, with some impact on their belief systems, even if they did not become Christians in a sense acceptable to the ecclesiastical or state authorities. The search for a 'pristine' pre-Christian religion would be a fruitless one. But the peoples like the Sámi, the Estonians, the Balts, and the Finno-Ugric nations of the Volga remained unchristianised (or at least partly unchristianised) because their religious practices were 'Christianesque' creole religions, where the evidence suggests that elements of Christianity and Christian imagery were integrated into essentially pre-Christian spiritual outlooks.

Scholars are, understandably, divided on the interpretation of such a fluid and ambiguous religious situation; the peoples of these regions existed on a sliding scale from believers with wholly Christianised outlooks (however lukewarm in their religious practice) to practitioners of pre-Christian ways who were barely aware of Christianity's existence. S. C. Rowell has reacted to this ambiguity by

interpreting the 'pagan' practices encountered by early modern missionaries in Lithuania and Livonia as 'folk culture', not much different from anywhere else in Europe.[163] Paganism was in the eye of the beholder, and Jesuits found it in the Lithuanian countryside because that was what they expected to find. As I have already argued, however, the danger of adopting an extremely sceptical stance with regard to the survival of pre-Christian religions into the early modern era is that we thereby buy into an 'essentialist' interpretation of Christian and pagan identities that is unsupported by the evidence. It is no more plausible to say that everyone at Europe's margins was a misunderstood Christian than it is to claim that they were proud and self-conscious pagans.

If we can rely on the testimony of the missionary accounts, the reality that emerges is more complicated than either of these essentialist stances. Sámi, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians usually thought of themselves as Christians; and in the eyes of the church, since most of them were baptised (albeit by lay community leaders), they technically were Christians. But they were often unsure of *how* to be Christians and, in the absence of clergy and a functional parish system, they fell back on ancestral tradition and half-remembered fragments of a Christianity that they or their ancestors had once been taught. The result was the formation of creole religions that merged Christian and pre-Christian elements into a functioning whole that served the purposes of the community at a time of pastoral crisis. And

[163] Rowell, 'Face beneath the Snow', p. 546.

while it is true that these creole religions were not always very different from expressions of popular religion elsewhere in Europe, popular Christianity (however deviant) in a deeply Christianised society is not the same as a creole religion. While creole religions result from the merging of traditions from different sources, in a deeply Christianised society no memory remains of any other religion. If deviance takes place, it emerges from within a Christianised culture – as Ronald Hutton, for example, has demonstrated in the case of the formation of figures of folklore who acted outside of established Christian understandings of cosmology.[164]

The difference in Sápmi, the eastern Baltic, and the Volga-Ural region was that Christianity's roots were still so shallow in the seventeenth century that pre-Christian traditions retained their significance – even if that significance was now refracted by a half-understood Christianity. The religious situation at Europe's unchristianised margins was therefore more readily comparable to the eighteenth-century Caribbean or modern Africa than to other areas of Europe, where Christianity was historically, socially, and institutionally entrenched. As the anthropologist Mary Douglas has argued in relation to the religion of the Lele people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, contact with Christianity should not be understood purely in terms of a binary decision to convert or to hold on to ancestral religious traditions. Regardless of conversion, contact with Christianity and the introduction of a Christian worldview as one way of interpreting the world can have a transformative effect on

[164] Hutton, *Queens of the Wild*, p. 196.

traditional societies and their religions. In the case of the Lele, this contact encouraged them to view their religion more dualistically, identifying one of their deities with the devil of Christianity, which led in turn to a strong belief in witchcraft.[165] In a similar way, twentieth-century Mordvin animists worshipped the god Nikulapaz,[166] a version of St Nicholas, and emphasised the filial relationship of the god Nishkepaz to the supreme god Chipaz – probably under Christian influence. Similarly, it is clear that the Mordvin evil being 'Shyaytan' is the Satan of Christianity.[167] Yet the admixture of these influences did not make Mordvin animists Christians.

As we have seen, pre-Christian religions are often characterised by their pragmatic approach to adopting new sources of sacred power and, therefore, contact with Christianity is likely to result in transformation as unchristianised people seek to accommodate elements of it for their own purposes. The old peasant at Kalkus in Estonia who sacrificed to the consecrated host but told people to stay away from church and blame their ills on the church stands for this paradox: that people can be hostile to Christianity and unwilling to adopt it, but still fascinated by the potential for spiritual power in a piece of bread claimed by the Christian priests to be God himself. Creole religions filled a spiritual vacuum left behind by missionaries who were good at destroying pre-Christian religions in remote regions, but not so good at putting in their place the full panoply of pastoral

[165] Douglas, 'Sorcery Accusations', pp. 178–9.
[166] Devyatkina, *Mordvinian Mythology*, p. 28.
[167] Devyatkina, *Mordvinian Mythology*, p. 29.

and spiritual support that a nascent Christian community needed to thrive. Their impact could thus be compared to the destruction or unbalancing of an ecosystem, whose consequences can be unpredictable. But just as life continues in different forms when an ecosystem is destroyed, so people responded creatively to the destruction of the spiritual ecosystems of pre-Christian cultures and newly fashioned makeshift religions filled the void. Ultimately, however, the limited nature of the information available to us and the dearth of voices from unchristianised communities in early modern Europe mean we can only guess at what such communities really thought and what their ritual behaviours were trying to achieve. What we can know is how antiquarians, ethnographers, and missionaries sought to portray them.

5

Darkness in Light

Pre-Christian Religion in Enlightenment in Europe

In 1768, an account of the origins of the Conventual Franciscan friars in Vilnius noted that in 1387 the friars had thrown down the statue of Perkūnas from the altar of the main cult centre (presumably Vilnius Cathedral), keeping it as a trophy in the corner of their dormitory; until, that is, 'the carelessness of an earlier age lost it'.[1] The friars' regret at the loss of an idol in whose honour their confreres had once been mutilated and nailed to crosses (according to tradition, at least[2]) embodied the spirit of the European Enlightenment: simultaneously fascinated by antiquities and yet repelled by irrationality and superstition. The lost idol of Perkūnas was at once an object of wonder and revulsion, as were the living people who apparently perpetuated pre-Christian practices in eighteenth-century Europe. However, as intellectuals increasingly questioned the very basis of Christian religious belief itself, the Enlightenment era also offered scope for more sympathetic evaluations of the 'natural' religions that preceded Christianity.

Sweden and Poland–Lithuania, under whose sovereignty many of the Continent's last unchristianised

[1] *BRMR*, p. 438.

[2] On the persecution of Franciscan friars in pagan Lithuania see Young, 'Mendicant Missionary Journeys', pp. 129–44.

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.009

peoples lived, were nations at the forefront of the European Enlightenment. While the continued existence of idolatry had been an affront to the Reformation and to the ambitions of the seventeenth-century state, by the eighteenth century curiosity was very much in the ascendant – not least because Christianity seemed at last to be succeeding among the recidivists. The Enlightenment posed searching questions about the nature of religion itself, and about human nature, that relic populations of unchristianised peoples could help to answer, even if they represented the antithesis of everything to which enlightened elites aspired. At the same time as Scandinavian and central European states began to look more indulgently on their unchristianised minorities, however, Russia adopted a brutal policy of forced conversion; the Enlightenment was an age of contradictions.

It is in the eighteenth century that most traces of pre-Christian religion in Europe disappear from view: the Sámi, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians seem to have adopted Christianity by the end of the century, at least nominally. In the case of the Lithuanians in particular, Christianity (specifically Roman Catholicism) had become an intrinsic part of the national identity by 1800. The situation in Russia was rather different, and although forced baptisms took place throughout the eighteenth century, the claim that the peoples of the Volga-Ural region were actually Christianised in the eighteenth century is a very dubious one. What we can say, perhaps, is that the eighteenth century was the first time when almost every person in northern Europe could have been expected to give lip service to Christianity, or at least feign allegiance to it.

Pre-Christian Religion in the Light of Reason

At the end of the seventeenth century the radical Dutch theologian Balthasar Bekker noted that 'there are some Pagans in the extremity of Europe, especially in the Northern parts, but they are so brutish and wild, that it is easier to see what they do, than to conceive or guess what they believe'.[3] Bekker was particularly interested in the Sámi, describing their religion in terms of *interpretatio Romana*, *interpretatio Nordica* (comparing their gods to the Norse gods) and the old trope of Lapp witchcraft.[4] However, Bekker also showed some interest in 'the remains of Paganism amongst the Samagites (i.e. Samogitians)', portraying them as animists who 'believe that there are Demons in the Air, and upon Earth, that reside in all those objects'.[5] In addition to the Samogitians, Bekker also noted the paganism of the Mari people ('Tartars Keremisses') and even the continuation of pagan practices in Iceland.[6] Bekker's interest in these unchristianised peoples was not so much to convert them to Christianity, however, as to make the point that many European Christians were just as superstitious as they were – for his crusade was for a perfectly rational Christianity, purified of such pagan-derived excrescences of belief as angels and demons. For such an Enlightenment mentality, the pagans at the fringes of Europe were little more than a harmless remnant whose chief function was to hold up an unflattering mirror to the imperfect and unenlightened Christianity of the rest of the Continent.

[3] Bekker, *World Bewitch'd*, p. 43.
[4] Bekker, *World Bewitch'd*, pp. 44–9.
[5] Bekker, *World Bewitch'd*, p. 49.
[6] Bekker, *World Bewitch'd*, pp. 49–50.

From the earliest days of the church, Christianity had taught that the first humans worshipped the true God; idolatry was an innovation and a corruption of true religion introduced as a result of the fallen nature of human beings and, indeed, by the deceit of demons who wanted to receive the honour due to God. The conversion of polytheists and idolaters to Christianity was thus a kind of correction, which enabled them to recover the true religion their ancestors had been deceived into abandoning. In the eighteenth century, however, an 'evolutionist' conception of the history of religion that took its cue from anthropology rather than the Bible supplanted this view. Enlightenment thinkers eager to argue that Christianity was – or could be – a rational religion presented it as the highest stage of an evolution of the human religious impulse, whose lower expression was polytheism. Thus the Italian visitor to Sápmi Giuseppe Acerbi, writing at the very end of the eighteenth century, found it quite natural that the Sámi should be animists and polytheists:

> There will be little difficulty in believing [that Sámi religion still exists], when it is considered how much more easy and natural it is for a people like the Laplanders, with circumscribed conceptions, and in a state of perpetual fluctuation from place to place, to believe in corporeal and limited deities in preference to one spiritual and omnipotent … and further, when we reflect on the imperious influence of custom, and the incurability of prejudices, we shall not be surprised that the Laplanders should prefer the polytheism of their ancestors even to the Christian religion.[7]

[7] Acerbi, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 294.

The idea that polytheism was 'natural' to human beings was linked with another idea, even more controversial from a traditional Christian point of view: that polytheism was 'the most antient [*sic*] religion among mankind' – a fact which Acerbi took to be more or less self-evident.[8] While Acerbi was patronising in his attitude towards Sámi religion, he also regarded it as superior in one respect to Christianity, for polytheism led to more tolerant attitudes:

> The gloom and darkness which almost incessantly hang over Lapland, has not communicated to the religion of its inhabitants either that moroseness or dejection, which too much pervaded the perversion of our most holy system of divine faith and worship during the dark ages. Though the Laplanders were habituated to sacrifices, yet they appear not to have been subject to rigid ceremonies, or severe mortifications; though weakness and ignorance were prevalent, yet we find little fear or melancholy.[9]

Enlightenment rationalism thus provided scope for a positive evaluation of polytheism – or, at least, for the evaluation of polytheism as better than medieval Catholicism. The idea that paganism might really be a monotheistic *philosophia perennis* (perennial philosophy) lurking under symbolic forms of polytheism had already been mooted by some avant garde thinkers in the seventeenth century.[10] Such an interpretation was driven by the need to comprehend the 'nobility' of ancient pagans rather than by ethnographical interest in present-day

[8] Acerbi, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 298.
[9] Acerbi, *Travels*, vol. 2, pp. 299–300.
[10] Mulsow, 'Antiquarianism and Idolatry', p. 196.

pagans. However, as Lynn Hunt, Margaret C. Jacob, and Wijnand Mijnhardt have argued, the eighteenth century saw the development of the concept of religion as an anthropological category itself, thanks to Jean Frédéric Bernard's *Religious Ceremonies and Customs of All the Peoples of the World* (1723–37). This book, illustrated by the engraver Bernard Picart (Plate 15), was the first attempt to describe all the religions of humankind from a more or less secular 'anthropological' perspective and 'sowed the radical idea that religions could be compared on equal terms, and therefore that all religions were equally worthy of respect – and criticism'.[11] Bernard and Picart effectively created the field of comparative religion, striving for a dispassionate analysis of all religions (although the work was, in fact, motivated by significant animus against Roman Catholicism).[12]

In a similar way, Pavel Horák has argued that the eighteenth century saw the emergence of a 'rational' and 'secular' analysis of pre-Christian religion founded on the adoption of the apparently neutral term 'polytheism', which was ostensibly different from the theologised discourse of previous centuries (although it remained essentially rooted in theological conceptions).[13] The valorisation of 'natural religion' had its roots in the thought of Edward Herbert, Lord Cherbury (1583–1648), who had argued that belief in a supreme deity was natural to all peoples and that worship of created things like the sun and moon was merely 'symbolic' rather than idolatry.

[11] Hunt et al., *The Book that Changed Europe*, p. 1.
[12] Hunt et al., *The Book that Changed Europe*, p. 19.
[13] Horák, 'The Image of Paganism', p. 127.

However, the introduction of priesthoods corrupted the pure, original natural religion and introduced idolatry and superstition.[14] According to Herbert, humanity's original natural monotheism became corrupted into polytheism, while worship was directed away from the supreme deity towards statues and other images. This account was, in a sense, a 'secularised' version of the Church Fathers' account of the deception of early human beings by demons who drew them away from the worship of the true God, except that Herbert insisted it was permissible to worship nature as a way of giving honour to the supreme deity. Thus he created the space for a 'purified' pre-Christian religion to exist, in theory if not in fact.[15]

The premise that the original religion of humankind was a kind of deist monotheism became widely accepted by Enlightenment writers such as John Toland, Charles Blount, and Bernard de Fontenelle.[16] Horák has argued that this analysis of the corruption of a pure, original monotheism intersected with an older anti-Catholic Protestant discourse on the corruption of early Christianity by the popes, which equated Catholicism with paganism or presented it as a kind of paganised Christianity destructive to the purity of the Christian faith.[17] The symbiotic relationship between anti-paganism and anti-Catholicism applied to contemporary non-Christians as well, and Paul Stock has argued that eighteenth-century British geographers drew on anti-Catholic tropes in order to deride

[14] Horák, 'The Image of Paganism', pp. 128–32.
[15] Horák, 'The Image of Paganism', pp. 132–5.
[16] Horák, 'The Image of Paganism', pp. 136–8.
[17] Horák, 'The Image of Paganism', pp. 138–9.

Asian religions – both in order to dismiss them and to render them readily comprehensible.[18]

David Hume (1711–1776) went further than earlier deist thinkers by suggesting that polytheism, rather than monotheism, was humanity's earliest religion – a position which undermined both the Christian and deist paradigms. However, Hume did not consider polytheism to be worse than monotheism, and he portrayed the latter as an abject attempt to appease a supreme deity that resulted in less tolerant religious attitudes than polytheism,[19] a position echoed by Acerbi in his assessment of the tolerance of the Sámi. Enlightenment discourse on paganism was thus characterised by the paradox that, while pagan idolatry was ostensibly the ultimate antithesis of the cult of reason, there was also the space to consider 'natural' religion in some sense superior to Christianity. The deists of the Enlightenment rejected the priority of revelation, preferring to judge religions by their moral worth rather than by the likelihood of their divine origin; there was thus no prima facie reason why remote peoples worshipping the sun, planets, and stars would be religiously inferior to Christians, even if idolatry and superstition were great evils.

Even the Spanish author José de Viera y Clavijo, writing on the Guanches of the Canary Islands centuries after their conversion and assimilation, was affected by this new Enlightenment sympathy towards 'natural' pagans. He described the Guanches as 'simple professors of the natural law' and insisted that it was easy for

[18] Stock, 'The Idea of Asia', pp. 134–5.
[19] Horák, 'The Image of Paganism', pp. 141–3.

them to accept Christianity because they were corrupted neither by pagan mythology, nor by philosophy, nor by the errors of Judaism or Islam. Rather, they believed in a single supreme deity and when they worshipped the sun, moon, and stars they did so as symbols of the deity's goodness and majesty.[20] For Viera y Clavijo, therefore, the Guanches had been uniquely privileged pagans: people in an almost prelapsarian state who had not yet fallen into the errors of other pagan peoples and were simply waiting patiently (even if they did not know it) for the illumination of the Christian faith. This positive evaluation of the Guanches in the eighteenth century was reflected in the appearance of the so-called *ceremonia Guanche* ('Guanche ceremony') at around this time – a celebration of the Feast of the Assumption when the people of Tenerife dress as Guanches and re-enact the discovery of the Virgin of Candelaria, literally taking on the roles of their pagan ancestors.[21]

However, while the eighteenth century was more open than any previous era to positive assessments of pre-Christian religion, it remains the case that these assessments were primarily theoretical, or applied retrospectively to extinct religions and cultures. Furthermore, although attitudes to religion were changing among elites in some nations, such change was by no means uniform and it certainly did not extend, for example, to eighteenth-century Russia. Colonial realities which subordinated unchristianised or recently Christianised

[20] Viera y Clavijo, *Noticias* (1783), pp. 2–3.

[21] On the *ceremonia Guanche* see Ortiz García, 'Islas de ida y vuelta', pp. 214–18.

peoples to Christian elites remained largely unchanged, with peoples like the Sámi and Estonians remaining marginalised within their own lands. These realities of social, cultural, and linguistic marginalisation placed a limit on the extent of Enlightenment curiosity about Europe's remaining unchristianised peoples, because a truly thoroughgoing questioning of the relative value of religious traditions might have called into question the morality of colonisation. It is important, therefore, not to exaggerate the extent to which unchristianised peoples benefitted from the new intellectual climate of the Enlightenment – and indeed, it was during this period that most unchristianised minorities finally accepted Christianity, whether voluntarily or under the pressure of violence or social and economic coercion.

Sápmi: Revival and Irreligion in a Land of Wonders

In the eighteenth century both Denmark–Norway and Sweden turned their eyes north to Sápmi as a potential rich source of natural resources, including metals, timber, tar, leather, and fish. Scandinavian entrepreneurs abounded in utopian visions for Sápmi, which usually involved the exploitation of the Sámi people and, of course, the challenge of 'civilising' them.[22] However, Tiina Äikäs and Anna-Kaisa Salmi have argued that whereas Sámi religion had often received attention in travel-writing by visitors to Sápmi in the seventeenth century, in the eighteenth century it receded into the

[22] Naum, 'Between Utopia and Dystopia', pp. 501–2.

background for visitors who viewed themselves as scientists rather than tourists or ethnographers. Visitors such as Carl von Linné (Linnaeus), Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, and Réginald Outhier were more interested in botany, mining, and geodesy than they were in religion, although Linnaeus famously acquired a Sámi costume and had himself depicted as a Sámi *noaidi*, complete with ritual drum (Plate 16).[23]

The changing role of traditional religion in Sámi society and its hidden character might have contributed to its reduced visibility.[24] For example, in the eighteenth century the offering of reindeer bones and antlers at *sieidi* sites seems to have ceased (albeit not entirely[25]), but the antlers and bones remained on display and offerings continued to be made in a different form, such as coins (a development paralleled at *hiis* sites in Estonia).[26] While the offering of coins was more discreet than sacrificing reindeer – and easier to conceal – it may also have reflected changing conceptions of value within the Sámi community, as a monetary economy was increasingly adopted. Another factor may have been the deliberate siting of eighteenth-century churches on or near traditional sacred sites, in order to encourage a transfer of religious focus.[27] Writing at the end of the eighteenth century,

[23] On Linnaeus's expedition to Sápmi see Lindskog, 'Constructing and Classifying "The North"', pp. 75–100.

[24] Äikäs and Salmi, 'North/South Encounters', p. 93.

[25] A 2018 study found that twelve samples of reindeer bone from *sieidi* sites dated from between 1700 and the present day (Salmi et al., 'Tradition and Transformation', p. 482).

[26] Äikäs and Salmi, 'North/South Encounters', pp. 96–7.

[27] Äikäs and Salmi, 'North/South Encounters', p. 100.

Acerbi described the treatment of such sites even after they were no longer being replenished with new offerings:

> The veneration of the *passe-warck* has not yet entirely disappeared: some Laplanders visit them yearly in their best clothes, and though they offer no fresh sacrifices, they are careful to leave the bones of former offerings untouched. On no account will they pitch their tents in the neighbourhood of these sacred spots, lest they should disturb the deities with the cries of their children, or other noises. When they pass them, they conduct themselves with the utmost reverence: they would not attack a fox, a bear, or any other animal, near these places; and if a woman be in their company, she is under the necessity of turning her head aside, and covering her face with her hands.[28]

Acerbi, who relied for his information about Sámi religion on the writings of Knud Leem (1696–1774), compared the converted Sámi to the Samaritans, mingling idolatry with worship of the true God, and reported that they had only 'lately' been 'fully converted'.[29] Acerbi was right that it was only in the eighteenth century that the Sámi had really begun to identify with Christianity, even if they had long been in contact with it. The major factor in this transformation was Pietism, a movement within Lutheranism emphasising personal piety and inner transformation. Where the state-sponsored imposition of communal creeds on marginalised people groups foundered, religious revival movements like Pietism might succeed. Revival movements often represented a form of grassroots religious populism, whose leaders could be drawn from the local community rather than parachuted in from cities and universities; and revival movements

[28] Acerbi, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 304. [29] Acerbi, *Travels*, vol. 2, pp. 305–6.

were notably better than state-sponsored missionary activities at ensuring Christianity was preached in local languages. By identifying with a revivalist movement, a marginalised group was able to maintain its distinctiveness, but in a Christian way. Indeed, revivalist movements soon exceeded the limits of Pietism, and in the 1760s the Čuorvut ('Shouters') movement sprang up in the Kautokeino area, encouraging its followers to enter religious ecstasies and fall down with convulsions – a practice with clear parallels with Sámi shamanism.[30]

The eighteenth century saw the tighter organisation of the church in Sápmi, and the first episcopal visitations for Troms and Finnmark (in Norwegian Sápmi) date from this period.[31] The Norwegian Pietistic mission began within a circle of clergy in Trondheim who, in 1714, presented a petition to the king of Denmark–Norway proposing a new mission to the Sámi.[32] The pioneering approach adopted by one of these missionaries, Thomas von Westen (1682–1727) was to preach in the Sámi language rather than tying mission to the adoption of Danish by the Sámi,[33] earning himself the epithet 'Apostle to the Sámi'.[34] In 1721 Erasmus Wallund (1684–1746) began his mission, and according to Von Westen, Wallund 'cut a hole on the walls of idolatry, and found everything full of false gods, the hammer of Thor, altars, and sacrifices', encountering significant resistance from 'idolaters' in Lødingen and Trondenes.[35] Lennart Sidenius (1702–1763) succeeded Wallund in 1726 and sent detailed accounts of the Sámi religion he

[30] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, pp. 109–10. [31] Storm, 'The Church', p. 63.
[32] Storm, 'The Church', p. 64. [33] Storm, 'The Church', p. 65.
[34] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, p. 143. [35] Storm, 'The Church', p. 68.

encountered. Sidenius and others persuaded and coerced Sámi people to hand over drums and other sacred items, amassing a collection of around seventy drums at the Missionary Collegium in Copenhagen, which were accidentally destroyed by fire in 1728.[36] Sidenius's colleague Jens Kildal claimed that the Sámi were not sincere in their adoption of Christianity, reporting that

> Although they were baptized, they were still heathen, which could be observed in that they ordered their children and servants not to follow what they were told by the priests, but instead to stand by their knowledge which they had learnt from the *noaidis* about sacrifices to the gods, about the symbols of the drum and the practice of religious rituals, about journeys to the *Jabme-ajmo* (the realm of the dead), and about the *joik* on the *Passe-vare* (the Holy Mountain).[37]

However, Von Westen's approach to Christianising the Sámi was based on persuasion rather than compulsion, and he persuaded the king to abolish the death penalty for idolatry on the grounds that it simply pushed such practices into secrecy.[38]

While Von Westen and his clergy laboured on the Norwegian side of the border, in Swedish and Finnish Sápmi (all then under the rule of Sweden), the Lutheran church relied on native-speaking Sámi lay catechists who were supervised by the clergy.[39] Here, too, there was some success for the missionaries as the eighteenth century wore on. Acerbi, an Italian botanist, visited Sweden in 1798 on an expedition to collect specimens of subarctic plants and

[36] Storm, 'The Church', pp. 68–9.
[37] Quoted in Storm, 'The Church', p. 70.
[38] Storm, 'The Church', p. 70. [39] Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, p. 141.

crossed the Gulf of Bothnia to Finland with his companions before journeying on into Sápmi. Acerbi reported that the Sámi treated visitors with suspicion because they assumed all visitors were either tax collectors, royal commissaries, or priests. Rather than finding idolatry among the Finnish Sámi, Acerbi reported indifference to religion: 'During the whole of our intercourse with these people, we could never discover among them the smallest sign of any sentiment of religion or devotion. They never offered up any prayer to the Deity when they went to eat, nor when they retired at rest, nor at rising in the morning'.[40]

Acerbi viewed the Sámi as simple and uncultivated – although this was not altogether a bad thing, as he portrayed them as motivated by honest self-interest and the most basic requirements of survival. His interpretation of the Sámi as irreligious reflected the assumptions about religiosity he brought with him (religion as something public, open, and regimented by the time of day), and what Acerbi reports suggests that these Sámi were indeed unchristianised. In all likelihood, the invisibility of their religious practices to the visitors was down to the fact that they would not reveal their religion to visitors and to foreigners – presumably for the same reason they were suspicious of visitors in the first place, believing all visitors to be missionaries or tax-collectors.

Later, the minister of the parish of Enontekiö informed Acerbi that the Sámi did indeed still practise their own religion:

> He informs us that the wandering Laplanders still preserve among them some remains of paganism. It happens here and there in

[40] Acerbi, *Travels*, vol. 2, pp. 56–7.

the deserts, that a stone is seen bearing some resemblance of the human form. The Laplanders, when they chance in the course of their movements from place to place with their herds to pass by any of these stones, offer up sacrifices to the idol. There is always found near them a number of rein-deer's horns.[41]

Acerbi was 'credibly informed' that the Sámi were still 'given to practises of the grossest idolatry', although he noted that 'they are at pains to conceal them from the missionaries'.[42] He acknowledged that some aspects of Sámi religion, such as the veneration of Radien Atzhie as a supreme god and Radien Kiedde as his son 'have been attributed not unreasonably to their superficial and imperfect acquaintance with the Christian doctrine'.[43] The evidence suggests that Sámi religion of the late eighteenth century, to the extent that it still existed, was a kind of 'legacy religion' that maintained the sacrality of certain places, but without the active performance of religious rites. A comparison could be drawn, perhaps, with the maintenance of Catholic spaces like chantry chapels within England's post-Reformation parish churches, which lost all religious significance after the Reformation but often continued to be mausolea of the ancestors of the local gentry and were therefore maintained. Sacred places have a much longer life than their period of active use.

Estonia: Failed Integration

On 10 October 1710 the Swedish-ruled city of Reval (Tallinn) capitulated to Russia in the Great Northern

[41] Acerbi, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 125.
[42] Acerbi, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 294.
[43] Acerbi, *Travels*, vol. 2, p. 296.

War, along with the rest of Estonia, and by the Treaty of Nystad in 1721 Estonia was formally incorporated into the newly proclaimed Russian Empire. While Russian dominance in Estonia would go on to have profound implications for the Baltic nation, down to the present day, it is doubtful that much changed in the early eighteenth century for the unchristianised Estonian peasantry. The Baltic German elite remained in place as city burghers and rural landowners and the Lutheran faith remained dominant, but allegiance was owed and taxes were paid to the tsar in St Petersburg. Estonia's peculiar religious position, as a Lutheran territory of the Russian Empire, may have contributed to the late survival there of creole popular religion – since ordinary people felt little affinity either with the Lutheranism of their Baltic German landlords or with the Orthodoxy of the distant tsar. In the eighteenth century Estonia experienced neither religious revivals like those in Sápmi nor the mass identification of the population with one type of Christianity, as occurred with Roman Catholicism in Lithuania. Overall, the ethnographic evidence suggests that the churches had failed to integrate Christianity into the lives of ordinary Estonians, even by the end of the eighteenth century.

Our principal source for Estonian religious beliefs in the eighteenth century is the writings of the Lutheran pastor August Wilhelm Hupel (1737–1819), who pioneered publication in the Estonian language and had a strong interest in ethnography. In 1789 Hupel described the continuing veneration of the *hiis* or sacred site:

> Among other things [the peasants] had the habit of fencing in some old tree, an empty space (most often where earlier a

house had burnt down) or a small pile of stones, and then from time to time they would bring offerings to the earth goddess of the first milk, butter, wool, money, etc., and they would also kill a black rooster in her honor around April 23 (that is, on St. George's Day); for this reason these places had a special sacrificial stone.[44]

Hupel noted that it was primarily 'the venerable aged' people who practised these customs, suggesting they were dying out. However, even younger people were reluctant to destroy such places; in the late eighteenth century the local landowner at Risti near Viljandi had to demolish the Risti chapel and its associated sacred grove himself, since no local person was willing to do it. This was a place that had been reported for 'idolatry' in the visitation of 1667–8.[45] In 1781 Hupel recorded that a man who cut down part of an ancient forest believed that the protective deities of the forest – which had existed since the beginning of the world – were now pursuing him in his dreams. He called these beings *maa-alused* ('subterraneans').[46] Like sacrifices of poultry on St George's Day, the cult of Tõnn (a version of St Anthony) in western Estonia was indicative of the creolised nature of Estonian religion – as though Catholicism had embedded itself sufficiently in Estonian culture to ensure the calendar of saints was observed, but not deeply enough to ensure those saints were not worshipped as deities. Tõnn came to be identified with the house spirit and was particularly associated with pigs; according to Hupel a pig's head was

[44] Quoted in Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 106.
[45] Kahk, 'Estonia II', p. 284.
[46] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 136.

always cooked on Tõnn's day (17 January) and offerings to Tõnn were brought to *hiis* sites and sacrificial stones.[47]

Hupel had a particular interest in the sexual mores of the Estonians, whose departure from conventional European norms suggested that Christianity had done little to penetrate Estonian culture. The Estonians, for example, lacked any concept of virginity, which was very significant in most European Christian societies. Premarital sex was thus the norm among the Estonians; it was only when a young woman became pregnant that a man would be expected to marry her and she would be 'capped' (start wearing a head-covering). Parents had no difficulty accepting premarital sex among young people; on the other hand, the Estonians considered sexual relations with Germans or Russians shameful.[48] Merili Metsvahi has argued that the sexual behaviour recorded by Hupel in the late eighteenth century might have preserved traces of an older 'matriarchal' organisation of society, where sexual norms were determined by women rather than men.[49] Whether or not Estonian sexual mores revealed the nature of pre-Christian Estonia's social organisation, they undoubtedly provide an indication of the disconnectedness of Estonians from the sexual norms of most other Christian European nations, where – even if such norms were often flouted – premarital sex, extramarital loss of virginity, and extramarital pregnancies were usually a source of social and familial shame. Even at the end of the eighteenth century, there seems little

[47] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, pp. 157–8.
[48] Metsvahi, 'Description of the Peasants' Sexual Behavior', pp. 309–11.
[49] Metsvahi, 'Description of the Peasants' Sexual Behavior', p. 317.

reason to believe that Estonians had been integrated into the religious mainstream of Christendom.

Although antiquarians did not collect Estonian cult images systematically (as they did *sieididi* in Sápmi), at least one was added to an antiquarian collection. An apparent cult image of an Estonian deity, perhaps the fertility god Peko, survived into the nineteenth century in the library of St Olaf's Church in Tallinn. First mentioned as 'an old Estonians' idol carved out of wood' by Hupel in 1774, the image was illustrated by Johann Christoph Brotze in 1800 and appears again in a small illustration accompanying the catalogue of the library's collections drawn up in 1875 by Gotthard Hansen. Hansen recorded the height of the statue as 90 mm and noted that it was carved with care from a single birch gnarl and depicted 'a shocking human figure with long hair falling back, a grimaced face and long earrings, with his hands and knees interlaced; the lower part of the feet are misshapen and end in five pointed extremities'. None of these antiquaries, however, were able to give an indication of the probable age of the cult image, which no longer survives,[50] and so we are unable to know if it was confiscated from eighteenth-century Estonians who were still worshipping it or if it represented a much older trophy of the struggle against idolatry.

Estonia was touched by the Pietist movement that swept Lutheran Europe in the eighteenth century. In 1738 a new pastor with strong Pietist leanings, Eberhard Gutsleff (1690–1749), arrived on the island of Saaremaa. Gutsleff began to mobilise a grassroots lay movement

[50] See Sutrop, 'A Wooden God of the Estonians', pp. 339–44.

that not only embraced a living and emotionally charged Christianity but also repudiated folk culture: '[The converts] put aside all worldly delights: bagpipes, harps, bugles, they burned and totally destroyed. The women put away their headbeads and their pinafores, which were gracefully embroidered with all kinds of ribbons and silver and gold braid, and all their pearls, corals and necklaces, and went into modest and honourable clothing'.[51]

In this environment it went without saying that all remaining traces of pre-Christian religion were banished. Tallima Paap, an Estonian Pietist lay leader in Võrumaa, became a quasi-messianic figure, encouraging his followers to give up sexual intercourse even in marriage, organising public penitential whippings, and preaching against the landlords.[52] By 1742 the Pietists had 3,000 followers in Latvia and 2,000 in Estonia, but in 1743 the Tsarina Elizabeth, siding with the official Lutheran church against the Pietists, outlawed the Moravian Brethren. Gutsleff and other leaders were arrested and taken to St Petersburg in chains. This put a stop to the revival but, as W. R. Ward argued, the transformations wrought in the period 1738–43 had a lasting influence, which allowed Pietism to revive when Tsar Alexander I lifted the ban in 1817.[53] Nevertheless, Estonia did not become a Pietist nation – or even, perhaps, a sincerely Lutheran nation – over the course of the eighteenth century, owing to the failure of the majority of Estonian peasants to form a committed Christian identity.

[51] Quoted in Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, p. 121.
[52] On Paap see Valk, 'Tallima Paap', pp. 357–71.
[53] Ward, *Christianity under the Ancien Régime*, p. 121.

Latvia: Lingering Idolatry in a Divided Land

For most of the eighteenth century what we now call Latvia was divided into three parts under different rulers: the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia in the west, the Russian Empire in the north (around Riga), and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the east (the Inflanty Voivodeship). By 1700 the Jesuit college in Daugavpils (Düneburg), which had been founded in the 1630s in an effort to replace the former Riga college, had a well-established tradition of missionary journeys into the marshy and forested backwoods of eastern Latvia, which remained under Polish–Lithuanian sovereignty and thus accessible to Catholics. The Jesuits continued to record in some detail the customs of people they encountered, while Lutheran scholars elsewhere in the country were becoming progressively more interested in the Latvian language, Latvian culture, and Latvian religion.

In 1713 the Jesuits of Daugavpils reported they had cut down two groves 'in whom some unknown god was being sacrificed to',[54] and in 1720 they reported there were about 600 'idolatrous forest-dwellers' in Livonia – which seems like something of an underestimate.[55] On one mission in 1720 alone, the Daugavpils Jesuits absolved 1,940 people of 'pagan superstitions' and 'idolatry'.[56] One of the most detailed descriptions of a grove of four sacred oaks dates from 1723:

[54] *BRMR*, p. 285.
[55] *BRMR*, p. 297. A report of 1723 estimated 5,000 'idolaters' in Livonia (*BRMR*, p. 310).
[56] *BRMR*, p. 300.

One of these oaks was greatly privileged – or, I ought rather to say, made infamous – by the assistance of an evil genius appearing under various forms … For indeed if it happened that some worshipper of this oak or even a neighbour slaughtered any animal for food for his family, if he did not first make some sacrifice to this infamous oak, then the evil genius, appearing in the form of a white bear, terrified that worshipper, or infected his sheep, or struck and beat someone from his household. Accordingly this oak, and others like it, were held in such great honour that no-one was permitted to touch them … Around the roots of this oak was a pavement built of stones, walled in by a circle by staves.[57]

The missionaries uprooted the tree and, just as in the fifteenth century, the locals were astonished that anyone could touch and it and escape unharmed. The description of structures around the tree is particularly interesting and is suggestive of a long-lasting, organised cult. The mention of paving and fencing recalls a 1789 report by the Lutheran pastor A. W. Hupel, who noted that the Latvians

have a custom of fencing a tree or empty space, especially in the place of an old house which burnt down, or a pile of rocks, and there they bring in sacrifice to the Goddess of Earth (*Erdgöttin*) the first milk, butter, wool and money. On the 23rd of April they cut a black rooster's throat in sacrifice to her; and there is usually a special rock set aside for this purpose on the abovementioned site. They hold such a place, which is to them something of a house-guarding god, in extraordinary respect: to climb over the fence and pick a strawberry or a raspberry etc. is in their eyes a crime that inevitably results in misfortune

[57] *BRMR*, p. 310.

or sudden death. This peasant belief is very old and probably common to all Latvians, Livonians and Estonians.[58]

Hupel's unnamed Erdgöttin was in all likelihood Zemes māte, 'Mother of Earth', who might be linked in turn with the Lithuanian earth goddess Žemyna.[59] Similar customs could be found in the north of the country. In 1740 a local Baltic German landowner, Heinrich von Hagemeister, reported on idolatry in the northern Latvian town of Drusti:

> In Drusti, as I was told, there is a tree, which had 13 stone idols standing beneath it; some of them were created from several stones put on top of one another, and one of them was called a *Spitzkopff*.[60] Peasant Jānis Vīlums used to offer here a bit of every meal before he ate and of every drink before he drank. Last winter, when the abovementioned peasant was burning his offering beneath the tree, it fell on him and his sons, who were 6 and 12 years of age. The fellow himself lived for 4 more days, but he did neither perceive nor say anything; the 2 sons were dead on the spot. Inspector … reports the stones still being in their places.[61]

The death of Jānis Vīlums would no doubt have been interpreted as evidence of the gods' vengeance. In 1725 the Daugavpils Jesuits reported people worshipping 'Penates, dryads, nereids, and other monsters of gods', naming Usins as god of horses and Biruta as goddess of sheep. Men made votive offerings to the roots of oaks and women to limes, including pieces of wax and metal, eggs, and small, old coins. Women prayed,

[58] Quoted in *LBM*, p. 233. [59] *LBM*, pp. 239–40.
[60] Apparently a German translation of Latvian *ašgalvis*, 'household spirit with a pointed head'.
[61] *LBM*, pp. 30–1.

Good day, o little lime, will you not make well? And by what fortune? Behold here my homage. Do not touch my children, I beseech you; nor my flocks, nor my sow, nor my health, and do not bring any injury of misfortune to us.

Even after the Jesuits had cut down thirty-seven trees and buried the stumps, the locals rescued branches from the felled trees, poured beer over the spot where the stumps were buried, and offered bread with the words 'Behold, o oak (or lime), I offer you gifts, so that you would allow other trees to be consecrated by these little branches.' The worshippers then touched the branches to the foot of another tree, with the words 'You will be my protector from now on, o oak (or lime), aid me with good health, successes, etc.'[62] This practice of 'consecrating' new trees as sacred by simply touching them with part of the old tree and asking them to become protectors accounts for the difficulty of stamping out tree worship. The Latvians did not consider trees sacred in and of themselves, but they also had a mechanism for rapidly sacralising new trees – which was, in all likelihood, developed in response to missionary campaigns of destruction. The local people concluded that the Jesuits must have some special words that protected them from retribution when they cut down the trees and groves – which was not far from the truth, as the priests exorcised the trees before they cut them down.[63]

The author of a life of the Daugavpils Jesuit Theophilus Kweck (d. 1736) identified four main festivals of the Latvians. At Suliszones a libation was made to the domestic hearth by the head of the household, while Veceles

[62] *BRMR*, pp. 323–4. [63] *BRMR*, pp. 326–7.

was the feast of the return of the dead around the time of All Saints' Day. At Subary, celebrated around St Martin's Day (11 November), a cow was led around the locality by a man dressed as a woman so that people could touch its feet, and Alkas was when offerings were made to oak trees by men and lime trees by women.[64] In 1742 the Daugavpils Jesuits found their work being done for them by a girl who claimed to have returned from the dead, where she witnessed idolaters and tree-worshippers being tormented in hell; the Jesuits were inundated with penitents as a result of people hearing her frightening testimony.[65]

As late as 1758 the Daugavpils Jesuits were still finding unbaptised adults; in that year a man of fifty was baptised.[66] The cult of Majas kungs ('Lord of the House') was one of the most enduring pre-Christian practices. According to Hupel, writing in 1789, in Valka Municipality in northern Latvia farmers would make piles of stones at their houses and call them Majas kungs; on St Michael's Day (29 September) they would then sacrifice a cockerel at the pile of stones and pour out a libation of beer in gratitude for the spirit's protection throughout the year, as well as asking for continued protection. Furthermore, in some parts of Latvia a small piece of food was set aside for Majas kungs at the start of every meal, and if a new member joined the household (through marriage, for example) he or she had to make an offering to Majas kungs. Like Aitvaras in Lithuania, Majas kungs was capable of causing illness if displeased or burning down the house if he chose to leave it.[67]

[64] *BRMR*, pp. 351–6. [65] *BRMR*, p. 365. [66] *BRMR*, p. 386.
[67] *LBM*, pp. 119–20.

In 1783 Gotthard Friedrich Stender, a Lutheran pastor in the Latvian town of Sēlpils, reported that 'Old Father, or simply *vecais* – old man' was how Latvians referred to 'the god who resided in the sky and rode on the clouds to see what people were doing'.[68] But was this 'god who resided in the sky' the Christian God? It is difficult to say. Other gods seem to have been invented subsequent to Christianisation. In 1717 a Lutheran pastor named Baerent from Rauna in northern Latvia described a ritual held in a barn in honour of the obscure god Bluķķu on the evening of 24 December:

> Innkeeper Wohgul, late in the evening, lit four fires at some distance from the four corners of the barn. He locked the door and barred the windows, and on the table in the barn he put a bunch of hay, a loaf of bread and a lamp, singing and praying with his people. When asked, he explained that it happens to honour the 'Bluķķu' deity.

If the name 'Bluķķu' is linked etymologically to *bluķis* ('log'), itself derived from German *block*, then Bluķķu may have been the god or spirit of the Yule Log burnt on Christmas night, which in the Baltic was traditionally decorated and dragged around the village as a focus of merriment; the rituals in honour of Bluķķu were, after all, performed on 24 December. The log would sometimes have a hole in it into which drinks were poured (perhaps originally libations to a deity), and it was occasionally carved with a human face.[69] As we have seen, it is important to bear in mind the possibility that people with a pre-Christian outlook would sometimes

[68] Quoted in *LBM*, p. 205. [69] *LBM*, pp. 45–6.

interpret Christian customs through the lens of animism or pre-Christian belief – with the result that apparently 'pre-Christian' beliefs and rites were sometimes a response to Christianity rather than something pre-dating its introduction. Another apparent 'pagan' deity who may, in fact, be a Christian saint is the Latvian 'goddess of destiny', Dēkla, whose function was described by Paul Einhorn: 'she, when a child is born, rocks them, for it is her duty to rock and protect little children'. Christian Kelch recorded the goddess's name as Dähkla in 1695, while for Hupel around a century later, Dēkla was 'generally their name for the goddess of women in childbed, under whose beneficial influence newborn children are said to sleep and grow well'. Although it is not the only way to account for Dēkla's name, one possibility is that she was simply a transformation of St Thecla.[70]

Not everyone commenting on Latvian pre-Christian religion, however, was a missionary or a moraliser. By the end of the eighteenth century the Latvian language was beginning to attract attention from lexicographers who were interested not just in the vocabulary of Latvian but in traditional stories and songs of the ordinary people. Stender devoted one chapter of his 1783 grammar of the Latvian language to mythology and recorded there a few snippets of *dainas* (Latvian mythological songs). Stender was convinced the *dainas* genuinely recorded pagan lore, an assumption transmitted to subsequent scholars.[71] For example, one song recounted a myth about Saule (the Sun), Mēness (the Moon), and Auseklis (the Morning Star):

[70] *LBM*, pp. 66–8. [71] *LBM*, p. 173.

Sun cut Moon in half
With a sharp sword,
Because he took from Morning Star
His bride betrothed.[72]

As we shall see in Chapter 6, in the nineteenth century the traditional mythological songs of Latvia would become the inspiration for a national revival and Latvia's best-known contribution to Baltic culture.

Although speakers of the Latvian language were divided between the Russian Empire and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the eighteenth century, and were split between areas dominated by Lutheranism and Catholicism respectively, it was in this era that the Latvian people finally began to embrace Christianity as something more than a foreign imposition. In the late 1720s a Moravian community was established at Valmiera.[73] While the initial leaders of the movement were German, in the 1740s native Latvians took responsibility for the religious revival at grassroots level,[74] and it was via Pietism that many Latvians encountered Christianity as a living religion for the first time.[75] In the view of Valdis Mežezers, it was only the changed attitude towards Christianity brought about by the Moravian revival that finally ensured Latvians gave up their pre-Christian beliefs.[76] However, the mass conversion of large numbers of both Latvian and Estonian peasants to Russian Orthodoxy from the 1840s onwards shows that neither nation formed a religious identity inseparable

[72] *LBM*, p. 33. [73] Mezezers, *Herrnhuterian Pietism*, pp. 64–74.
[74] Mezezers, *Hernnhuterian Pietism*, p. 82.
[75] Mezezers, *Hernnhuterian Pietism*, p. 84.
[76] Mezezers, *Hernnhuterian Pietism*, p. 29.

from Lutheranism and reveals the still unstable religious convictions of these peoples.[77]

Lithuania and Samogitia: Holy Trees, Holy Stones

There is a greater wealth of documentation on 'superstitious practices' in eighteenth-century Lithuania than for any other period, judging from Vytautas Ališauskas's monumental edition of sources for Baltic religion and mythology. How much of this documentation reflects ongoing pre-Christian religious practices is less clear, however. The Latin term most often used for apparent pre-Christian practices was *ethnicae superstitiones* ('ethnic superstitions'), linking deviant practices with the Lithuanian peasantry and the Lithuanian language. The continued practice of dining with and offering food to the spirits of the dead was a frequent complaint, although rather as Schefferus had acknowledged that the Sámi practised sorcery in self-defence, so the Lithuanian Jesuits recognised that people performed these rituals in order to prevent the return of the dead, who would torment them in dreams and apparitions. Another frequent preoccupation was witchcraft and magical practices with no clear pre-Christian connection – or indeed quite the opposite, like people claiming to heal by the names of Jesus and the Virgin Mary.[78] As often as not, people were reportedly abusing the Christian faith rather than displaying total ignorance of it. Ecclesiastical interventions like the blocking up of unauthorised holy wells,

[77] Staliūnas, *Making Russians*, pp. 135–6. [78] *BRMR*, p. 287.

which happened at Betygala in 1719,[79] occurred all over Catholic Europe.

A synod of the diocese of Vilnius in 1717 lamented the proliferation of witchcraft but made no mention of idolatry.[80] On one interpretation, the transition from the vocabulary of idolatry to that of witchcraft might be seen as a deliberate ploy to denigrate the relics of pre-Christian religion and suppress them more easily, as witchcraft was a higher priority for the authorities than idolatry. But this ignores the fact that folk-magical practices crossed the lines of the Christianised and the unchristianised, as well as the Lithuanian church's active opposition to the judicial prosecution of witchcraft. As early as 1672 the bishops of Lithuania had demanded that the grand duke downgrade the secular courts' competency to hear witchcraft cases, and in 1710 Bishop Brzostowski demanded that witchcraft cases be left to the church courts. In 1717 the Vilnius synod went even further, denouncing secular witchcraft trials as an offence against the church, while a further synod in 1744 threatened anyone who organised a witchcraft trial with excommunication.[81]

The church did not succeed entirely in wresting control of witchcraft investigations from the state, but its threats seem to have had some effect, in Vilnius and elsewhere. In Žagarė, the estate agent responsible for judicial proceedings in the mid-eighteenth century ensured there were no witch trials at all by fining anyone who made an accusation of witchcraft for defamation, although his

[79] *BRMR*, p. 296. [80] *BRMR*, p. 289.
[81] Zujienė, 'Witchcraft Court Cases', pp. 94–5; Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, p. 56.

motivation for doing so remains unknown.[82] The rapid decline of witchcraft trials in Lithuania after 1700 followed the same pattern as in Livonia, where trials likewise plummeted in the period 1700–29.[83] In the eighteenth century the Catholic church became increasingly hostile to witchcraft trials (on the grounds that they usurped the church's authority over a spiritual crime), although in 1752 the bishop of Samogitia was still arguing it was lawful for a priest to hand over a suspected witch to the secular courts if the accusations seemed well founded.[84] However, the church's bid for handling witchcraft accusations in place of the state was only likely to succeed if the church took a hard line on witchcraft, and this goes some way towards explaining the intense interest in witchcraft shown by missionaries and churchmen in the eighteenth century. However, the Jesuits' priority was to encourage people to confess their witchcraft, and then absolve them, and they became increasingly hostile to the burning of witches; when a woman was burnt for witchcraft on the orders of local nobles in 1725, when nothing had been proven against her, the Vilnius Jesuits treated her almost as a martyr: 'In the midst of the horrid flames she suffered agony patiently, calmly and bravely, and went to her refreshment.'[85] One of the principal complaints of Bishop Józef Michał Karp of Samogitia against nobles who burnt witches, in 1737, was that they did not first ensure the accused confessed their sins and received absolution.[86]

[82] Zujienė, 'Witchcraft Court Cases', p. 118.
[83] Madar, 'Estonia I', p. 261.
[84] Zujienė, 'Witchcraft Court Cases', pp. 109–10.
[85] *BRMR*, p. 321.
[86] *BRMR*, p. 359.

The extent to which Samogitia had been Christianised by this point is revealed in the practices Bishop Karp singled out as 'relics of paganism and vain observances'. These included people's habit of prostrating themselves on the ground when they first heard thunder, the lighting of bonfires and dancing on St John's Eve, women 'drawing threads for sin' on the evenings between Christmas and Epiphany, and women pouring water on one another on Easter Tuesday and Wednesday. The bishop condemned Ladą diena on Easter Thursday, when women did no housework in order to ensure the frost did not harm crops, and a similar practice for craftsmen on Easter Tuesday.[87] Whether or not these practices were 'relics of paganism', they were scarcely comparable to the kind of pre-Christian practices described by Jerzy Szawinski nearly a century before. Eighteenth-century Samogitia, it seems, was well on the way to Christianisation.

'Old Lithuanians' or 'Old Yotvingians' who were 'given to superstitions and idolatry' could still be found in the parish of Charnauchycy in Brest as late as 1721;[88] these terms seem to have referred to isolated communities of Baltic-speaking people living in what is now south-western Belarus. Unexpected evidence for the existence of these communities came to light in 1978 when a young Belarusian man, Viačasłaŭ Zinaŭ, bought an antique Latin prayer book from an old man living in the Białowieża Forest on the border between Belarus and Poland. Zinaŭ found a number of manuscript pages stitched into the back of the old printed book entitled (in Polish) 'Pagan Dialects from Narew' (*Pogańskie*

[87] *BRMR*, pp. 359–60.
[88] *BRMR*, p. 301; Kamuntavičienė, 'Religious Faiths of Ruthenians', p. 165.

gwary z Narewu), which turned out to be a glossary of words in an unknown language. Narew is a Polish village in Podlachia that takes its name from the River Narew, a tributary of the Vistula. Zinaŭ copied the glossary – which was fortunate, since his parents threw the prayer book away in the fear that Zinaŭ might become a religious believer and incur the disapproval of the Soviet authorities. 'Pagan dialects from Narew' immediately attracted attention from Baltic linguists as evidence of the extinct Yotvingian language; but judging from the title and context of the glossary, it was also a relic of the period when missionaries were attempting to convert Yotvingian pagans in the Białowieża Forest. Frustratingly, however, it is difficult to date the prayer book with any exactness from Zinaŭ's description – except that it pre-dated the partition of Poland–Lithuania and, based on other evidence for the 'Old Lithuanians', probably dated from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.[89]

The huge and religiously diverse diocese of Vilnius made mission challenging in the rest of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In 1717 the Vilnius Jesuits complained that people were still feeding the dead, but referred to the worship of snakes as a thing of the past.[90] The following year, however, they reported meeting people 'who worship the sun and moon as god'.[91] A mission in the autumn of 1718 found country people worshipping the sun, the moon, thunder, fire, and a god of bread, as well as sacrificing to the earth and the *penates* (household spirits).[92] A 1722 report to Propaganda Fide in Rome described the worship

[89] On 'Pagan dialects from Narew' see Zinkevičius, 'Польско-ятвяжский словарик?', pp. 3–29.
[90] *BRMR*, p. 286. [91] *BRMR*, p. 291. [92] *BRMR*, p. 293.

of a rock deep in the marshes at Užusieniai near Vilnius, 'where they genuflect and prostrate themselves, offering bread, wool, linen and money, and especially travellers' staffs' on the first Sunday of a new moon.[93] As at Gelvonai in the previous century, people claimed that the footprints of the Virgin Mary could be seen on the rock and claimed they had been told in dreams to visit the rock in order to have their ailments healed. Unlike at Gelvonai, however, the Jesuits decided to suppress rather than indulge the popular devotion; the footprints, they said, looked more like those of a dog than of the Virgin, and so the rock was uprooted and, during the winter, it was submerged under the ice in the deepest part of the marshes.[94]

Another sacred rock was found the following year at Okainiai, which the local people called 'Šora'. Formerly located on a hill between two trees, it was now placed at a fork in the road and local people believed anyone who showed it disrespect would be destroyed by fire. When the Jesuits were seen alive and well in church after denouncing the stone, therefore, even the local nobility were astonished. The missionaries noted that there was a great gathering of people in the woods on the day after St Peter's Day (30 June) known as Žaislė. Men and women played games and drank for two nights, but the Jesuits reported that the festivities often ended with someone being murdered. In a particular irony, the Jesuits found people making pacts with a devil they called Ihnat, the local name for Ignatius – perhaps in a strange sort of inversion of the immense power the Jesuits attributed to relics of their founder St Ignatius of Loyola.[95]

[93] *BRMR*, p. 305. [94] *BRMR*, pp. 307–8. [95] *BRMR*, pp. 317–18.

The cult of the earth also continued and in 1726 the Vilnius Jesuits found people burying vessels of clay or wood as offerings to the earth.[96] The continuation of sacrificial offerings into the eighteenth century is confirmed by archaeology; at Montviliškis and Vaidulionai archaeologists have found remains of sacrifices made at stones with holes in them.[97] Similarly, sacrificial libation vessels have been recovered that may date from this period (Plate 17). The Jesuits regarded the cult of Pagirnis as 'an implicit pact with a demon',[98] but, according to a man of Vabalninkas, if Ponas Drukelis was invoked together with God he would ensure a safe crossing of a river (a significant concern in a country where bridges were few).[99] Clergy sometimes claimed to encounter people with no knowledge of Christianity whatsoever, like the 'more than a thousand men of no faith' recorded in 1723,[100] and those 'who were found to have no knowledge of God and no faith' near Vilnius in 1728.[101] Occasionally the Jesuits seem to have classified pre-Christian worship as witchcraft, such as when one person was 'delivered from witchcraft by practising an implicit pact' in 1731.[102]

Vincentian priests (Congregation of the Mission) arrived in Lithuania from Poland in 1685 and did not confine themselves to suppressing pagan worship – they targeted traditional festive culture too. In 1728 they managed to ensure fines were imposed on men near Šešuoliai who dressed up as an old man, a woman, and a horse and its rider, visiting houses between Christmas

[96] *BRMR*, pp. 329–30.
[97] Vaitkevičius, *Studies into the Balts' Sacred Places*, p. 31.
[98] *BRMR*, p. 331. [99] *BRMR*, p. 331. [100] *BRMR*, p. 310.
[101] *BRMR*, p. 341. [102] *BRMR*, p. 349.

and Epiphany (and, so it was alleged, simulating sexual acts).[103] However, what the missionaries described sounds much like Christmastide guising customs involving cross-dressing and 'mock horses' found elsewhere in Europe, including Britain. Rather than being of pagan origin, these customs seem to have derived from an elite late medieval or sixteenth-century fashion for hobby-horses,[104] and travelled east where such customs were mainly recorded in Poland, Moldova, and Hungarian-speaking Transylvania in the nineteenth century.[105]

The celebration of supposedly 'pagan' rites according to the Julian Calendar was an occasional preoccupation of the missionaries – in 1723 the Vilnius Jesuits complained about people bathing and offering food to the dead at Old Style Easter, Pentecost, St Martin's Eve (10 November), and Christmas.[106] In 1733 the Daugavpils Jesuits recorded that they had persuaded 1,280 people 'not without long disputations and controversies' to observe fasts according to the Gregorian Calendar, with another 400 dissuaded from this error in 1736.[107] By 1743 the term 'Old Lithuanians' had come to refer to those 'who communicate according to the Latin rite, but observe the feasts and fasts of the Greek Ruthenians'.[108] *Interpretatio Romana* remained a standard hermeneutic in the eighteenth century, with the lexicographers Jakub Brodowski (1730) and Philipp Ruhig (1747) interpreting the Lithuanian god Jagaubis as an analogue of the

[103] *BRMR*, p. 344.
[104] On the history of this custom in Britain see Pikli, *Shakespeare's Hobby-Horse*, pp. 44–5.
[105] Pikli, *Shakespeare's Hobby-Horse*, p. 39. [106] *BRMR*, p. 311.
[107] *BRMR*, pp. 351, 353. [108] *BRMR*, p. 367.

Roman god Vulcan.[109] Brodowski identified Magyla, an assistant to the Lithuanian goddess of death Giltinė, as a *furia* (fury).[110] As we have seen, the household gods were routinely identified with lares and penates. However, new deities were still being discovered (or perhaps conjectured); Brodowski's dictionary added Blizgulis, a deity of snow, to the Baltic pantheon.[111]

The missionary accounts of the diocese of Vilnius reveal two broad hermeneutics in play with respect to the remains of pre-Christian religion. One was the 'hermeneutic of error', where people were trying to be Catholics but had erred by inadvertently or deliberately defaulting to *ethnicismus*, 'ancestral ethnic religion'. However, other reports portrayed the people as irreligious, lacking in any knowledge of God or religion. This 'hermeneutic of irreligion' portrayed the Lithuanians not so much as religiously deviant but as wholly devoid of any kind of faith. This void of faith was then filled with a miscellaneous collection of superstitions, because there was nothing else to fill it; little attempt was made to recognise or describe a coherent alternative worldview or cosmology.

Why and how, then, did Lithuania's pre-Christian or creole religion finally come to an end? By the 1760s the Bernardine friars (Observant Franciscans) had joined the Jesuits as missionaries to rural Lithuania. These missions typically involved denunciations of 'vain superstitions' and the burning of objects of superstition that were probably images of pagan deities or unauthorised saints.[112] In 1786,

[109] *LBM*, p. 91. [110] *LBM*, p. 119. [111] *LBM*, p. 44.
[112] *BRMR*, pp. 390–1 (missions at Valažinas, Bienica, and Prienai, 1763), pp. 391–414 (missions at Budslaul, Rabun, and Papročiai, 1764),

an elegy in memory of the priest Michael Roth lamented that 'barbarity and the relics of idolatry still flourish' among the Lithuanians.[113] But such observations were rare in the second half of the century and in the last three decades of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth the missionaries may actually have made some headway. In 1795 the third and final partition of the Commonwealth saw Lithuania pass to the Russian Empire, marking a religious as well as a political watershed for the nation. The religiously mixed nature of the former Grand Duchy, and the presence of Orthodoxy within it, meant that Lithuania became an ideological battleground between the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox churches. Cultural and political resistance to the Russian Empire in Lithuania was intense, foreshadowing the pivotal role of Lithuanian resistance almost two centuries later in the unravelling of the USSR, and it often took on a religious complexion. Catholic priests became key figures in the perpetuation of Lithuanian national identity, and the flowering of Lithuanian popular Catholicism at the turn of the nineteenth century surely marked a fusion of national and religious identity in Lithuania as a self-consciously Roman Catholic country.

In an environment when to be Lithuanian was to be a good Catholic, older forms of creolised religion – which might once have been a form of resistance to polonisation – simply lost their raison d'être. But it is also possible that pre-Christian practices 'disappeared' simply because they were no longer recorded or noted; after partition

pp. 415–18 (mission at Kubličiai, 1765), pp. 418–24 (mission at Bistryčia, 1765), pp. 426–31 (mission at Lentupis, 1766), pp. 433–7 (mission at Daugai, 1767).

[113] *BRMR*, p. 448.

the Catholic church in Lithuania's priority was surviving under Russian rule rather than regulating the minutiae of peasant belief. But it is perhaps more likely that the building of churches, the growth of settled village life, deforestation, and the fact that people were living further away from the forest had a larger impact on patterns of ritual. With the church closer at hand than other sacred sites, a combination of identification with Roman Catholicism, social change, and cultural forgetting came together to render pre-Christian rites a thing of the past, even if the memory of them lingered on in folklore.

The Volga–Ural Region: Conversion as Russification

While there had been few attempts at extensive missionary activity or forced conversion in seventeenth-century Russia, aggressive efforts at conversion began again in the eighteenth century, reaching a peak of intensity in the 1740s. These forced conversions were tied intimately to the tsars' cultural and political agenda of Russification: to be Orthodox was to be Russian, and so in order to be Russian, people had to become Orthodox. Decrees of 1706 and 1710 threatened the Khantys and Mansis of the Urals with death unless they received baptism, while authorities in the 1740s drove whole villages of animists along the Volga into rivers for forced baptism. Those who received baptism were also offered tax relief and exemptions from military service, although these promises were not always honoured by the Tsarist administration.[114]

[114] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 61.

However, the Russian Orthodox church's failure to preach in any language other than Russian meant that the appeal of Orthodoxy to non-Russian peoples would always be limited and 'conversions' were underpinned by political convenience rather than conviction. Such an aggressive mode of mass conversion failed to eliminate animism, a mode of religiosity so intimately tied to the everyday life of hunters, fishermen, and forest-dwelling slash-and-burn agriculturalists that the imposition of a shallow political allegiance to Christianity could hardly remove it. As events in the nineteenth century would come to show (discussed in Chapter 6), in spite of baptism animist allegiances remained close to the surface among European Russia's Indigenous peoples.

In 1719 the Russian writer Ivan Pososhkov lamented the Russian Empire's failure to convert the unchristianised peoples within its dominions, which was particularly shameful since – unlike the distant peoples converted by Catholic missionaries – the Mordvins, Maris, and Chuvashes were under Russian political control. Russia's confrontation with the Ottoman Empire at the end of the seventeenth century seems to have intensified Russia's sense of itself as a bulwark and champion of the Christian faith, which perhaps contributed to the intensification of internal missionary activity.[115] Just as 'neophytes' had been distinguished from the rest of the population in late medieval Livonia, so the newly baptised in Russia came to be known as the 'newly enlightened' (*novoprosveshchennyi*), and in 1721 the Holy Synod admonished the bishop of Vyatka that people should not convert simply to obtain

[115] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', p. 278.

tax exemptions and other privileges and that they should be taught the faith before baptism. Indeed, there was some conflict between the Holy Synod and the navy, with the latter wanting all labourers baptised as a matter of course while the Synod insisted on religious instruction.[116]

Nevertheless, forced conversions of a crude kind continued. In 1718 unbaptised Mordvins were deported as forced labour to the 'ship forests', where oaks were grown to supply the Russian navy, and taxes were imposed on sacrificial groves. However, it was not until 1740 that church and state began an all-out attack on Mordvin animism, with soldiers and priests roaming the countryside and herding whole villages into rivers for forced baptisms. By 1743 the 'baptism' of the western Mordvins in the provinces of Nizhny Novgorod and Voronezh was complete, with the eastern Mordvins of Kazan following by 1747. The state, which had promised temporary exemption from taxation in exchange for baptism, frequently reneged on this, and the formerly free Mordvin peasants were sometimes reclassified after baptism as Russian serfs. In 1743, however, Erzians violently resisted forced Christianisation when a newly appointed bishop set sacred trees on fire in the cemetery at Teriushovo. Declaring that 'we pray according to our Erzian faith, in the fields and woods',[117] and threatening to burn everything and flee into the forest (or even set themselves alight),[118] the Erzians took up weapons and chased away the bishop's men. Troops were sent against them from

[116] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', pp. 281–2.
[117] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 162–3.
[118] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', p. 284.

Moscow; the Erzian leader Nesmeian Vasilev retreated to the woods and held out for two years against Russian forces, but the Russians took revenge by systematically destroying Erzian sacred trees and groves and brutalising Erzian women. Prisoners taken to Nizhny Novgorod were mutilated and Mordvin emissaries to Moscow were intercepted and captured.[119] When Vasilev – the leader of Europe's last 'pagan' revolt – was finally captured, he was burnt to death.[120]

The reason why missionary activity intensified in the 1740s was the establishment, in 1740, of the Agency of Convert Affairs, which was supposed to operate in the provinces of Kazan, Astrakhan, Nizhny Novgorod, and Voronezh. Kazan was a particular target for the agency, with a focus on the destruction of mosques.[121] But animists were also targeted. In Mari El, the year 1743 saw the expulsion from their homes of anyone who remained unbaptised in Mari villages, along with the execution of forced baptisms.[122] However, adherence to Christianity was shallow, and foreign travellers such as Johann Gottlieb Georgi and Gerhard Friedrich Müller continued to describe the Chuvashes and Maris in terms of their pre-Christian beliefs, held alongside nominal adherence to Christianity.[123] Concern about the insincerity of conversions prompted Russian officials to force the largely illiterate Maris to 'sign' pledges to adhere to the Christian

[119] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', p. 285.
[120] On the Mordvin revolt of 1742–4 see Werth, 'Armed Defiance', pp. 249–55.
[121] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', pp. 283–4.
[122] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 212.
[123] Luehrmann, 'The Magic of Others', p. 447.

faith from 1750.[124] However, whereas ex-Muslims were forced to repudiate their faith in some detail before being baptised, no such demands were made of animists.[125]

In the case of the Udmurts, forced Christianisation began in earnest in 1724, led by the bishops of Vyatka and Kazan, and in 1740 the government imposed a mixture of tax relief for those who agreed to baptism and forced labour for those who refused. Baptism proved popular among the Udmurts, and Taagepera estimated that around 200,000 Udmurts, Mordvins, and Chuvashes were baptised just in the years 1746–7 out of a population of half a million.[126] In Udmurtia, too, there was resistance, but it mainly took the form of words rather than rebellion; a travelling animist preacher threatened that the Udmurts would be plagued with darkness and man-eating serpents if they accepted Russian ways. However, during the Pugachev Revolt (1773–5) the shallowness of the Udmurts' commitment to Christianity was revealed when they stopped attending church, broke the icons, and robbed and beat their local Orthodox priests.[127] Meanwhile, in the far north the Nenets continued to resist Russian officialdom and Christianisation, and they launched their last attack on Pustozersk on the Pechora River in 1746.[128]

The Chuvashes presented the Russian authorities with a particular challenge because they were not only unwilling to adopt Christianity, but also willing to adopt Islam

[124] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 212.
[125] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', p. 286.
[126] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 264–5.
[127] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 265–6.
[128] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 353.

and become 'Tatarised' (culturally assimilated into the Tatars). In 1749 the Holy Synod mandated that Chuvashes who abandoned (or would not accept) Christianity should be taken to a monastery and baptised; they were to be executed if they refused, along with any Tatars found to be leading Chuvashes to Islam. Furthermore, marriages between Tatars and Chuvashes were to be annulled and their children taken from them.[129] Even where the Chuvashes became Christians, they adopted a popular Christianity influenced by popular Islam – in particular the concept of *kiremet'*, a word derived from Arabic *keremet* (which was originally the miraculous power of a Muslim saint). *Kiremet'* in Chuvash belief, however, was a spirit connected with a particular place which had the power to cause disease or disaster if not appeased, while *kiremet'* was both a spirit and a place – who was believed to be brought to dwell in a place by an act of violence.[130] While the church made efforts to demonise the *kiremet'*, Chuvashes responded by turning icons and churches into *kiremet'*. For instance, in 1751 a Chuvash farmer found a 'miracle icon' in a field, depicting St Michael and St Basil on one side and St Nicholas on the other. A church was built to house the icon at Ishaki that became, in effect, a *kiremet'*, visited by local people when they fell ill or when they were advised to do so by diviners; there they offered candles and coins to the icon in much the same way as offerings were made to *kiremet'*.[131]

In 1763 the Agency of Convert Affairs registered 95 per cent of all Maris, Mordvins, Chuvashes, and Udmurts as

[129] Arik, 'Islam among the Chuvashes', p. 42.
[130] Goto, 'Metamorphosis of Gods', pp. 145–6.
[131] Goto, 'Metamorphosis of Gods', pp. 153–4.

baptised,[132] but the following year Catherine II abolished the agency and brought the period of forced conversions to an end. Funding was to be redirected towards preachers and schools, while the recently baptised were to be issued with an icon, a cross, and a voucher to be used against future taxation.[133] Catherine's opposition to forced conversions was driven by a combination of her commitment to Enlightenment values and political pragmatism: the partitions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth brought Catholic Poles and Lithuanians and Lutheran Baltic Germans into the Russian Empire that there was little prospect of converting to Orthodoxy, rendering de facto toleration a prudent measure to maintain the unity of the empire.[134] Nevertheless, the conversion of Russia's pre-Christian peoples was only a half-finished work, as Prince Mikhail Shcherbatov noted in 1776, lamenting that the Orthodox church

> brought them to baptism in the same way they would have been brought to a bath, and gave them a cross, which, in their ignorance, they consider some kind of a talisman, and an image of Christ, which they regard as an idol, and forbade them from eating meat on fasting days, which they do not follow, and the priests take bribes from them for overlooking this. Likewise, no attempt was made to translate the Holy Scriptures into their language, nor to teach it to the priests, so that they were able to preach.[135]

The Russian Orthodox church, in contrast to the Protestant reformers and the Jesuits and other Roman

[132] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', p. 286.
[133] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', p. 287.
[134] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', pp. 288–9.
[135] Quoted in Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', p. 289.

Catholic religious orders, failed to develop a coherent approach to conversion that 'acculturated' Christianity to the people it tried to convert. Minimal efforts were made to train priests in the languages of unchristianised peoples or to recruit and train clergy from non-Russian backgrounds, and the imposition of the Russian Orthodox faith by force became indistinguishable from the imposition of Russian political dominion and economic exploitation. The animists of the Volga-Ural region submitted, eventually, to baptism in the same way they submitted to Russian political hegemony; but in the same way that rule by Russia did not make these peoples Russian, so mere submission to Christianity did not truly make them Christian. And, as we shall see, animist faiths would reappear in the nineteenth century, in a process that is perhaps better described as re-emergence than as revival.

Conclusion

The eighteenth century was, for many of the peoples who are the subject of this book, the end of their long history as unchristianised peoples who had developed their own creative responses to the arrival of Christianity. Some, such as the Estonians, remained stubbornly non-committal when it came to their true religious allegiance, while the animists of European Russia dissembled the Christianity so crudely (and cruelly) imposed on them. It seems unlikely that the rationalist ideology of the Enlightenment did much to end pre-Christian religious practices in and of itself, but it did change attitudes towards pre-Christian religions at a time when the sun

was finally setting on the last traces of Europe's ancestral faiths. In some cases, such as the Sámi's adoption of ecstatic varieties of Pietist Lutheranism, the popularity of Moravian Pietism in Latvia, and the Lithuanians' adoption of Roman Catholicism in the face of partition by Orthodox Russia, assuming a Christian identity became a way of perpetuating a people's distinctiveness in a new way. In other cases, however, the decline of pre-Christian traditions may have had more to do with cultural forgetting and the long attrition of Christian cultural influence, than with a deliberate decision to jettison such traditions for a new Christian identity.

Over time, religious and ritual behaviours seem to have slipped into other cultural realms, turning into expressions of folk magic, customs focussed on ensuring luck or good fortune, or apotropaic practices designed to avert bad luck. Formerly religious behaviour became *sub-religious* behaviour, mimicking some of the content of pre-Christian practices but lacking their former significance and ceasing to be opposed in any way to a Christian identity. As Christianity became more integrated into people's lives, popular Christianity slowly came to replace the creolised religions – compounded of elements of Christianity and pre-Christian religion – that had formerly served the purposes of communities. And once Christianity gained a cultural and social foothold as a desirable component of individual and communal identities, the old ways may simply have slipped away into forgetfulness. At the same time, as we have seen in the case of Sámi sites of sacrifice, a kind of *legacy religion* sometimes endured, whereby the sacred sites of the old religion remained sacred even if they were no longer actively used for rituals. The strong

cultural prejudice against the felling of trees in contemporary Lithuania – which often leads to mass protest – may be another such example.

While some people may have rejected Christianisation in the eighteenth century as a deliberate choice, it is likely that most people were trying to be Christians but did not really know how. They may have genuinely believed they *were* good Christians, in their own way, like the people the Jesuits found in Lithuania apparently trying to make pacts with St Ignatius, confusing him with the devil, and those who tried to justify the veneration of rocks via claims of Marian apparitions. The combined campaign of exorcism, destruction, and Christianisation of natural features regarded as a sacred sites in the Baltic can be compared to the approach of priests in New Mexico, who targeted pre-Columbian rock art and attempted to Christianise it.[136] Similar attempts to Christianise sacred rocks with crosses occurred in Lithuania as well.[137] As in the New World, Catholic mission in the Baltic was driven primarily by the theological imperatives of the Counter-Reformation rather than by the state; indeed, Poland–Lithuania seems to have had no religious policy at all regarding its unchristianised people. Even in Sápmi, where Sweden and Denmark–Norway had historically adopted an aggressive policy towards Christianisation, gentler methods came to be adopted in the age of the Enlightenment.

Russia was a notable exception to this trend and Michael Khodarkovsky has observed that conversion in

[136] Young, *History of Exorcism*, p. 146.
[137] Vaitkevičius, *Studies into the Balts' Sacred Places*, p. 32.

eighteenth-century Russia 'was conducted more in the manner of Charlemagne than in the manner of the contemporary New World',[138] in the sense that conversion in Russia was inseparable from – indeed one and the same act as – political domination. Yet as the crusaders of the Baltic had discovered in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the degree of force used to exact conversions is inversely proportionate to the degree of commitment of new converts; forced baptisms do not make for sincere Christians. But whether by force, by forgetting, or by grassroots ecstatic Christian movements, Europe's unchristianised peoples had largely abandoned their religious traditions by the end of the eighteenth century – at least in public view. Europe (outside of the Ottoman Empire) was to all appearances a Christian continent by 1800. But the burgeoning movements of Romanticism and nationalism were summoning forces that would bring pre-Christian religion to the forefront of European culture once again in the new century.

[138] Khodarkovsky, 'Conversion of Non-Christians', p. 142.

6

Folklore and Fantasy

The Nineteenth-Century Reinvention of Paganism

In the nineteenth century Europe's unchristianised minority – who barely existed by 1800 – passed rapidly from centuries of vilification to lionisation as the bearers of pristine cultural and national identities. The driver behind this dramatic shift was nationalism, arguably the most important political trend of the nineteenth century, which challenged the integrity of the multi-ethnic dynastic empires. The cosmopolitan Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian Empires came under increasing pressure from national minorities within them eager to reassert or develop a national identity and establish independence, while the nations of Scandinavia similarly moved from various forms of personal union towards independence and Germany and Italy emerged as unified states. But in order to become a functional and successful state that commands the loyalty of its population, a nation is in need of a history; it was for this reason that many nations began to recover (or, some might say, confabulate) pre-Christian histories for themselves. For nations like Finland, Estonia, and Latvia, Christianisation had arrived in the Middle Ages alongside colonisation and ethnic and cultural subordination, rendering Christianity a problematic heritage. Imagined pre-Christian 'national' religions were correspondingly

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.010

culturally attractive – even if the historical reality of such religions always lay just beyond reach.

In most cases, nineteenth-century interest in pre-Christian religion did not progress as far as religious revival – although, as we shall see, the Volga-Ural region of Russia was an exception. The 'native faith' movements of northern and eastern Europe were largely a twentieth-century phenomenon; they lie beyond the scope of this book and have been covered well elsewhere.[1] The purpose of this chapter is not so much to consider the phenomenon of 'pagan revival' in the nineteenth century (something I have done elsewhere with Robin C. Douglas[2]), but rather to explore what the unchristianised recent past meant for the nineteenth-century peoples of Fennoscandia, the Baltic, and the Volga-Ural region, the three regions in Europe that were the last to be Christianised. Motivated by a desire for national rebirth, intellectuals engaged in a systematic reappraisal of the pre-Christian past – albeit not always on the basis of sound knowledge of that past. At the same time, traces of the pre-Christian past still lingered in practices recorded by folklorists and ethnographers. Nineteenth-century interpreters have profoundly influenced the way several countries perceive their pre-Christian past, but for

[1] On native faith movements see, for example, Strmiska (ed.), *Modern Paganism in World Cultures*; Aitamurto and Simpson (eds.), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements*; Rountree (ed.), *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements*; Douglas and Young, *Paganism Persisting*. Furthermore, *The Pomegranate: The International Journal of Pagan Studies* is a journal dedicated to the subject of contemporary pagan revivals.

[2] On pagan revivals in the nineteenth century see Douglas and Young, *Paganism Persisting*, pp. 115–35.

all their enthusiasm they arguably did more to obscure than to illuminate that past, with significant cultural consequences that reach to the present day. This chapter argues that the cultural perception of 'paganism' characteristic of the nations of northern and eastern Europe was largely an invention of the nineteenth century and the hermeneutical approaches adopted in that period.

Revaluing and Reviving: Nationalism and the Pagan Past

In many nations of contemporary central and eastern Europe, and indeed in migrant communities originating in those nations, an enthusiastic minority practises 'native faiths': self-consciously reconstructionist forms of neo-paganism based on a particular interpretation of pre-Christian religion. While the origin of most of these groups is recent and has much to do with the fall of Communism and the cultural reinvention of formerly Communist states, the idea of reviving paganism – and, prior to reviving, *revaluing* paganism as somehow praiseworthy and good – has a deeper history which is rooted in the nineteenth century. Agnieszka Gajda has argued that the process of historical development underlying native faith movements can be divided into three phases: the rediscovery of pre-Christian religion; its revaluation; and finally the 're-Paganization' of religious practices. The rediscovery of native faiths did not necessarily have a religious dimension and was often driven by nationalism and a search for identity; 'revaluing', however, involved a process of elevating the importance of folk culture and folk religion (as well as real or imagined

native faiths) and was therefore in some sense a religious process; while 're-paganising' involved the establishment of avowedly neo-pagan religious movements. This final stage is something which, in most cases, did not occur until the twentieth century.[3]

Focussing particularly on the emergence of interest in the pre-Christian past in Poland, Gajda has shown that Slavic philopaganism emerged originally from Johann Gottfried Herder's (1744–1803) portrayal of a 'Slavic Arcadia'. This inspired the Polish author Adam Czarnocki, better known as Zorian Dołęga-Chodakowski (1784–1825), to advocate a return to Slavic paganism and the abandonment of Christianity.[4] However, the example of another self-declared 'pagan' Pole, Bronisław Trentowski (1808–1869) (Plate 18) suggests that Romantic philopagans may not really have been engaged in a genuine revival of pre-Christian religion. Instead, they were interested in drawing on the fragments of knowledge about Slavic religion in order to supply a new, 'native' set of personifications and symbols for concepts they considered important – a sort of native grammar of Romanticism. Thus, for Trentowski, the deities of the Slavic pantheon were representative of virtues.[5] Talk of the old gods and goddesses was a little like putting on national costume – a form of self-conscious performative Slavicising that had much more to do with cultural identity than it did with genuine religious belief. Trentowski was only a Slavic pagan in the same sense that William Blake was a British druid; his writings were

[3] Gajda, 'Romanticism and the Rise of Neo-Paganism', p. 44.
[4] Gajda, 'Romanticism and the Rise of Neo-Paganism', pp. 45–8.
[5] Gajda, 'Romanticism and the Rise of Neo-Paganism', pp. 49–51.

a literary exercise in cultural evocation rather than an attempt to re-establish a religion.

Nevertheless, interest in the pre-Christian past extended well beyond a minority of eccentric Romantic enthusiasts in those nations that had been among the last to throw in their lot with Christendom. In a study focussed on nineteenth-century Estonia, Kristi Kukk has argued that perceptions of 'pagan brutality' shifted as nationalism gradually became narratively dominant compared to religion in the self-understanding of emerging nations. Although this shift was not complete in Estonia until the twentieth century, already in the nineteenth century it mattered more that the Estonians had been deprived of freedom than that the pagan Estonians had been brutal.[6] The nineteenth-century nationalists thus applied a new hermeneutic to the medieval chronicles, setting aside the issue of religion and focussing instead on the wrongs done to native peoples and their right to fight back against colonisers. In Latvia and Estonia, nationalists demonised the Baltic Germans, while in Lithuania a strong anti-Polish sentiment developed among ethnic Lithuanians.

However, Lithuania's history as a Christian nation was complicated compared to Latvia's and Estonia's, since it is more difficult to argue that the faith was imposed on Lithuania by force or as an act of colonisation. Nor was Catholicism synonymous with Polishness and paganism with Lithuanianness; by the early nineteenth century Lithuanianness was closely bound up with being a Catholic. Nevertheless, writers

[6] Kukk, 'Stubborn Histories', pp. 147–9.

such as Simonas Daukantas (1793–1864) and Teodor Narbutt (1784–1864) (Plate 19) strongly identified with Lithuania's pagan period and 'othered' Catholicism. But ignoring Catholicism and the role of Poland in Lithuania's history made it impossible to process large swathes of Lithuanian history – and was out of touch with grass-roots national feeling – and by the end of the nineteenth century historians were placing a greater emphasis on the (nominally Catholic) Vytautas the Great as the central figure of Lithuanian greatness, since he ruled the Grand Duchy at its greatest geographical extent.[7] There was no sense in which Daukantas thought of himself as a pagan; rather, his 'philopagan' approach to Lithuanian historiography is better viewed in the context of the secularising tendencies of nationalists who declined to consider Christianity (and varieties of Christianity) an important element of national identities. The pagan past was, in the imagination of nationalists like Daukantas, an essentially 'pre-religious' past.[8] In a similar way, Lalli, the legendary murderer of St Henry, the first bishop of Finland, became a national hero in nineteenth-century Finland. This was not because he was a pagan, but because he represented a 'pure', pre-religious Finnishness and thus appealed to secular nationalists.[9]

While Daukantas focussed on Lithuanian historiography, Narbutt's interest was in Lithuania's national mythology – which he was very willing to supplement, when it suited him. Several well-known figures of Lithuanian folklore, such as Milda 'the goddess of

[7] Kukk, 'Stubborn Histories', p. 146.
[8] On Daukantas see Baár and Baár, *Historians and Nationalism*, pp. 226–30.
[9] Tamminen, 'Axe of Lalli', pp. 91–3.

love' and the lovers Jūratė and Kastytis (a mermaid and the mortal man she falls in love with) were invented by Narbutt. While we might be inclined to see this as a dishonest practice by the standards of today (akin to forgery), Narbutt was open about what he was doing; he believed sincerely that those who became learned in the folklore of a nation gained access to a reified 'soul of the nation' that spoke, like an ancient Greek Muse, to the poetic soul of a nation's writers. It was thus quite proper for writers to draw upon 'the soul of the nation' for narratives that, while invented, were nonetheless 'authentic'.[10] Indeed, mythographers in Latvia and Estonia acted evenly more boldly than Narbutt, stitching together fragments of folklore into new full-scale vernacular national epics. Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald completed the Estonian national epic, about the giant Kalev (the *Kalevipoeg*) between 1853 and 1862,[11] while in Latvia Andrejs Pumpurs's epic of the bear-slaying warrior Lāčplēsis was published in 1888.[12] Both *Kalevipoeg* and *Lāčplēsis* drew on genuine mythological and folkloric material, but they assembled it into wholly new narrative structures – a process that Sylvain Gouguenheim likens to the creativity of J. R. R. Tolkien.[13] Indeed, the Estonian scholar Aivar Põldvee goes so far as to describe the accepted Estonian mythology as 'pseudo-mythology' and even 'fakelore'.[14]

[10] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 146; *LBM*, p. 140.
[11] Västrik, 'In Search of Genuine Religion', pp. 133–4.
[12] Tamm, 'History as Cultural Memory', pp. 499–516; Prusinowska, 'They Are Still Coming Back', pp. 66–84.
[13] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 146.
[14] Põldvee, 'Agricola's List', pp. 449–50.

According 'folklore-inspired' literary confections of the recent past authoritative cultural status is clearly problematic – akin to declaring *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, published in the 1950s, to be the foundational epic of the English people. But in reality the use of folk culture to access and reconstruct the past becomes problematic long before the confabulation of such mythological epics, because it is based on controversial assumptions about the capacity of folklore, folk song, and folk custom to preserve information from the deep past. This problem is particularly acute in the case of the Latvian *dainas*, traditional songs collected in the Latvian countryside in the nineteenth century and mined by ethnographers for information on pre-Christian Baltic religion ever since. In 1880 the Latvian folklorist Krišjānis Barons (1835–1923) had a special cabinet built in Moscow to accommodate over 268,000 sheets containing transcriptions of *dainas*, a task already begun by Fricis Brīvzemnieks (1846–1907) in the 1870s. The appeal of the *dainas* to ethnographers lay in the fact that they seemed to provide a Baltic mythology, including narratives of the family, relationships, and deeds of the Baltic gods and goddesses – something that earlier ethnographic material singularly lacked. However, some Latvian intellectuals like the poet Rainis (1865–1929) went further, convinced that the key to a lost ancient religion could be found in the *dainas*.[15]

There can be no doubt that the tradition of singing *dainas* is an old one; in 1649 Paul Einhorn had reported that '[Latvians] still call to their gods for help, which can

[15] Stasulane, 'The *Dievturi* Movement', p. 32.

be seen particularly in their songs: they sing them in their own language and they are real hymns to honour their gods.'[16] Unfortunately, Einhorn did not give the text of any of the *dainas* as they existed in the mid-seventeenth century, but Barons presumed that the *dainas* he recorded were the same songs (or at least the same type of song) Einhorn had referred to nearly 250 years earlier. There was a problem with this assumption, however; Einhorn was referring to songs sung in Courland, which were extinct by Barons's time, while Barons was collecting songs from northern Latvia.[17] Even if Barons was correct that the traditions of passing on mythological songs in Courland and northern Latvia were essentially the same, we are confronted with a troubling interval of two-and-a-half centuries between Einhorn's 'real hymns to honour their gods' and Barons's collecting of *dainas*. The idea that that Latvian *dainas* did not change in any significant way during this time stretches credulity and relies on an unhistorical – indeed, ahistorical – image of folk customs as untouched by time that has long since been rejected by most folklorists.

Casual assumptions about the mutual interchangeability of 'cognate cultures' were not uncommon in the nineteenth century; we see them, for instance, in the widespread assumption among Victorian scholars of Old English that the much richer mythological material from Scandinavia could be used to reconstruct the probable roles of the gods in pre-Christian English society, given that Woden/Odin, Thunor/Thor, and so on were straightforward cognates. This line of reasoning

[16] Einhorn, *Historia Lettica*, p. 17. [17] *LBM*, pp. 52–3.

was deeply flawed, however, not only because there is no logical reason to assume that figures with etymologically related names will retain the same mythological functions,[18] but also because the *Prose Edda* that described the Norse gods was many centuries younger than the last glimmers of pre-Christian English religion (and, of course, composed after the Christianisation of Scandinavia itself). Like scholars who assumed that the *Prose Edda* could serve as a surrogate mythology for early England, so Krišjānis Barons assumed that what Einhorn said of Courland could be applied to northern Latvia.

The idea that the *dainas* represent an authentic source of ancient Baltic mythology – indeed, almost a kind of Latvian pagan scriptures – is of immense cultural significance in Latvia. It is possible that the *dainas* do indeed encode genuinely ancient mythological information. But there is no way to be certain that the *dainas* actually preserve data on pre-Christian Baltic beliefs. The rarity of traditional songs with mythological content in Lithuania compared to Latvia can be interpreted in terms of Latvians preserving an ancient oral tradition more effectively than the Lithuanians;[19] but it could also be interpreted as evidence that mythological songs were simply a more popular genre in Latvia. A popular genre, in fact, that was creative rather than being simply an ark of ancient mythological information.

We have no way of knowing if Einhorn was correct in his belief that the *dainas* of the mid-seventeenth century were pre-Christian in content, because he did not record their content. And Einhorn's failure to record the *dainas*

[18] Young, *Twilight of the Godlings*, pp. 200–3. [19] *LBM*, p. 135.

of his time makes it impossible to compare them with the *dainas* of the nineteenth century recorded by Barons, even if we accept that the song traditions of Courland and northern Latvia were near identical. So the idea that the Latvian *dainas* are a reliable source of information on pre-Christian Latvian religion could easily be a mirage. It is just as likely that the *dainas* recorded in the nineteenth century were a few decades old and resulted from a creative process of combining and recombining narrative elements and familiar mythological names – a fascinating process in its own right, of course, but one rooted in narrative creativity rather than the immaculate preservation of ancient data. And the idea that the *dainas* are a reliable record of Latvian religion reaching back 'to Vedic times' is fanciful, to say the least.[20]

It was not only nationalists who fostered the development of understanding of pre-Christian traditions in the nineteenth-century Baltic, however. Germans and Baltic Germans undertook important work on Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian mythology, such as Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831–1880) in his *Letto-Preussische Götterlehre* ('Letto-Prussian Doctrine of the Gods'), although it remained unpublished until 1934.[21] In the early years of the partition of Poland–Lithuania, the Russian Empire pursued a degree of tolerance of Lithuanian aspirations, even reopening the Jesuit-run Vilnius University in 1803 as the Imperial University of Vilnius. The Leiden-educated Russian nobleman Nikolai Rumiantsev (1754–1826), who lived at Gomel in what is now Belarus, took a leading role in 'refurbishing'

[20] Ozoliņš, 'Dievturi Movement', p. 95. [21] *LBM*, p. 19.

Lithuanian history, forming a circle of scholars, bibliophiles, archivists, and antiquarians to reorient Lithuanian history towards Lithuania's incorporation into Russia. The group prepared Russian translations of key documents of Lithuanian history such as Maciej Stryjkowski's chronicle, although most of these remained unpublished on Rumiantsev's death. However, Linas Eriksonas has argued that Rumiantsev's circle was effectively infiltrated by – or possibly unwittingly fostered – nascent Lithuanian nationalism. Four years after Rumiantsev's death Poland and Lithuania rose in the so-called November Uprising against Russian rule, which lasted from November 1830 to October 1831. Several of Rumiantsev's collaborators took part in the uprising, such as the Samogitian priest Albin Niezabitowski, who later published Samogitian ballads in exile in Paris.[22]

The example of the Rumiantsev Circle shows the political power of antiquarianism and the study of history, which could turn even an attempt to subordinate Lithuania's past to Russian history into an expression of Lithuanian national identity. From the point of view of the tsarist regime, the November Uprising showed that such ill-starred endeavours to include national minorities were futile and did not encourage loyalty or discourage rebellion. Accordingly, in 1832 Tsar Nicholas I promulgated the Organic Statute, which brought to an end any semblance of autonomy for Poland or Lithuania within the Russian Empire, and over the course of the nineteenth century persecution of expressions of Lithuanian national distinctiveness intensified. Such persecution

[22] Eriksonas, *National Heroes and National Identities*, pp. 268–72.

peaked after the January Uprising of 1863, resulting in a total ban on the publication of books in Lithuania in 1866 and a ban on the use of Latin script, with the only books allowed being those printed in Moscow using Cyrillic script.[23] However, whereas efforts at Russification in Latvia and Estonia resulted in thousands of conversions to Russian Orthodoxy, the Lithuanians remained stubbornly Catholic – in part because, as the governor of the Vilna Governorate observed in the 1860s, they had been converted directly to Catholicism from paganism.[24]

Just as religious Russification failed, so the proscription of the Lithuanian language merely intensified nationalist sentiments, especially as it was possible for books to be smuggled from German-ruled Lithuania Minor, where there was intense philological interest in the Lithuanian language and in Lithuanian culture and mythology. Indeed, Prussia's Lithuanian-speaking Lutheran minority in Lithuania Minor played a key role in the rebirth of Lithuanian national identity. Eduard Gisevius (1798–1880) had a particular interest in remains of pre-Christian Lithuanian religion and studied the sacred hill of Rambynas on the bank of the River Nemunas, then in Prussian territory. Between 1825 and 1835 (when Rambynas hill partially collapsed into the Nemunas) Gisevius visited Rambynas many times and collected stories and lore from local people, allowing him to reconstruct what the 'altar' (a sacred stone) on top of Rambynas had looked like before 1811, when it was broken up by a miller to be used as millstones.

[23] On the Lithuanian press ban see Williams, 'Lithuanian Awakening', pp. 137–52.
[24] Staliūnas, *Making Russians*, p. 135.

Before its destruction, the stone had had a flat surface that reflected the rising and setting sun and bore marks resembling a sword, a temple, and human and animal footprints (Plate 20). The folklore gathered by Gisevius suggested the altar stone had been venerated until its destruction (although the *laumės*, fairy-like beings, were honoured at Rambynas rather than gods), and in 1928 Martynas Jankus recovered part of one of the millstones made from the altar stone and incorporated it into a newly built 'altar' on Rambynas, intended as a national shrine of the Lithuanian people. This 'altar' was destroyed in turn by the Nazis when they annexed the Klaipėda region from Lithuania in 1939.[25]

It would be an exaggeration to see the revival of Rambynas, stemming from Gisevius's antiquarianism, as a 'neo-pagan' phenomenon. It was, rather, a focus for a kind of 'ritualised nationalism' that valorised the pagan past without crossing the line into neo-pagan religion. Fortunately for the Baltic nations, the simultaneous collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 and the defeat of Germany in the First World War created the geopolitical space for them to re-emerge in a near-miraculous fashion as independent nations, bolstered by their nineteenth-century traditions of national myth-making. Perhaps inevitably, since the struggle against Christianity was so central to such national myths, neo-pagan revivals began to emerge in the aftermath of independence. In 1925 Ernests Brastiņš (1892–1942) and Kārlis Marovskis-Bregžis (1885–1958) launched a revived Latvian pagan religion known as

[25] Vaitkevičius, 'Rambyno šventvietės griūtis', pp. 11–23.

Dievturi. They even provided the new faith with a catechism (modelled, ironically, on Martin Luther's) in 1931.[26] An Estonian pagan revivalist movement, Taara usk ('the Creed of Taara'), was also launched in 1925, proposing a revival of the cult of the Estonian thunder god Taara,[27] and in 1926 the Lithuanian writer Domas Šidlauskas-Visuomis (1878–1944) founded a religion based on his interpretation of Baltic pre-Christian religion (combined with elements of Buddhism), which he called Visuomybė ('Universal Faith').[28]

Whereas Šidlauskas-Visuomis enjoyed limited success in Lithuania (and eventually emigrated to the United States), Latvian Dievturi achieved a degree of recognition from the Latvian state early on,[29] and both Latvian and Estonian native faith movements became closely entwined with far-right nationalist movements. All of these movements were suppressed by the Soviet Union, which invaded and occupied the Baltic states in 1940, although they were to emerge in new forms in the post-Soviet era. Just as Daukantas's philopaganism can be viewed as a secularist nationalist response, so the spiritual interests of Šidlauskas-Visuomis and other early revivalists, such as Vilius Storostas-Vydūnas (1868–1953) are perhaps better seen as esotericist spirituality rather than the kind of full-blown reconstructionist religion that arrived in the second half of the

[26] Stasulane and Ozoliņš, 'Transformations of Neopaganism', pp. 237–8. On Dievturi see also Broka-Lāce, 'Is it Possible to Reconstruct a Prehistoric Religion?', pp. 143–6.
[27] Misāne, 'Inter-War Right-Wing Movements', p. 79.
[28] Pranskevičiūtė, 'Contemporary Paganism Practices', p. 78.
[29] Ozoliņš, 'Dievturi Movement', p. 95.

twentieth century. Šidlauskas-Visuomis and Vydūnas were esotericists who drew upon their own imagined forms of pre-Christian Baltic religion alongside Buddhism, theosophy, and Hindu spirituality to construct occult worldviews.[30] Scholarly discussions of the true nature of Baltic religion were of comparatively little interest in such endeavours.

Among the nineteenth-century nationalists, the 'pagan' past became one tool among many to fashion an ideal and idealised history for the nation. The destruction of the nation's original 'paganism', and the introduction of the foreign faith of Christianity, was one way of accounting for the nation's fall into obscurity under the rule or influence of foreign potentates. None of this meant, of course, that the nationalists were interested in pre-Christian religion for its own sake, or that they knew much about it. To most nationalists it did not really matter *what* their pre-Christian forbears had believed; the point was that a 'national' religion had once existed. As the issue of language came to dominate discourses of identity in the nineteenth century – coinciding with the growth of scholarship in linguistics – movements like pan-Slavism (belief in the unity of all speakers of Slavic languages) and pan-Fennicism (belief in the unity of all speakers of Finno-Ugric languages) emerged. The idea that a shared linguistic history must mean a shared cultural and religious history was a seductive one: it seemed obvious that all Slavs had once shared a single religion, as had all Finno-Ugric-speaking peoples. And just as languages had diverged as they diffused from

[30] On Vydūnas see Strmiska, 'Romuva Looks East', pp. 125–50.

the linguistic *Urheimat* (original homeland), it seemed logical to interpret religious practices and myths according to the same pattern.

As we have seen during the course of the preceding chapters, the variety of beliefs and ritual practices among Europe's unchristianised peoples was extensive even in the early modern period when such cults were in steep decline. Indeed, it is an argument of this book that pre-Christian and creolised religions in Europe were characterised by their rich variety and regional particularity. The 'diffusionist' idea that each people has an original religion in its linguistic *Urheimat* that subsequently diversified or 'degenerated' into local variations betrays a Christian-inflected understanding of what religion is: a fixed set of beliefs and ritual practices that believers approach either rightly or wrongly. But there is little historical evidence to suggest that pre-Christian northern Europe's religions were like this; they were, rather, sets of beliefs and ritual practices creatively devised in response to community needs – rooted, of course, in the traditions of the community, but also highly innovative and flexible. Furthermore, there is no compelling evidence that cultural (and still less religious) similarities and continuities can be assumed between peoples on the grounds of linguistic kinship alone. The idea that there was an original 'proto-Indo-European' or 'proto-Uralic' religion is contentious, to say the least.

Assuming that linguistically kindred nations *must* be religiously and culturally alike has ongoing consequences for the interpretation of folklore and mythology. For example, Éva Pócs has shown that the presentation of the Hungarian *táltos* as a shaman is a construct

of nineteenth- and twentieth-century ethnographers who assumed the culture of the Magyars *ought* to contain a shaman-like figure – by analogy with the cultures of other Uralic-speaking nations. In all likelihood, Pócs argues, the historical *táltos* was a weather-diviner and magical practitioner specialising in the weather.[31] In a similar way, 'neo-Shamanism' in contemporary Sápmi is predicated on the idea that the Sámi *noaidi* must be analogous to the shamans of central Asia and the Americas.[32] Whether true or not, such 'universalising' interpretations of pre-Christian traditions can have the effect of subordinating pre-Christian religions to anachronistic conceptual frameworks that emerge from nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship and theory: Baltic religion might be seen as 'Vedic', Finno-Ugric religion as 'shamanic', and regional distinctiveness as little more than just local colour and costume.

The generalising tendency in the interpretation of pre-Christian religions, so prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, held back the study of these religions because it discouraged dispassionate examination (to the extent that such a thing is ever possible) of the evidence for pre-Christian religion in the historical sources. Ethnographers, anthropologists, and comparative mythologists were more interested in what they thought they should find than in the testimony of the sources themselves. This is not to say that 'theoretical' attempts to reconstruct long-vanished belief systems are worthless or pointless. They may well have merit,

[31] Pócs, 'The Hungarian *Táltos*', pp. 149–96.
[32] On Sámi 'neo-Shamanism' see Kraft, 'Sámi Neo-Shamanism', pp. 25–42.

but they are not truly the business of the historian, for the historian must present the scattered evidence for pre-Christian religion while setting aside preconceived ideas of what that religion involved. To have such preconceived ideas will affect the historian's selection of relevant evidence. It has been the approach of this book, therefore, to stay largely clear of speculative reconstruction and to remain close to the testimony of the sources themselves. For the same reason, this book is avowedly a history of Europe's unchristianised *peoples* and not a history of the *religions* of those peoples – a history which (in my view) cannot be written, for we know too little about those religions to describe them in any systematic way.

It is in nineteenth-century portrayals of pre-Christian religion that we find many unhelpful misconceptions about it that persist to the present day. These include the idea that a single pre-Christian religion was coterminous with the whole nation, that this religion was antithetical to (and a coherent opponent of) Christianity, that conversion and Christianisation occurred rapidly, and that 'paganism' went underground. In reality, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, what little evidence we have points to great diversity of belief even in one people, the exchange of religious ideas across ethnic boundaries (such as the spread of the Finno-Ugric idea of transformation into werewolves to the Latvians), and the significant period of time that might elapse between a conversion event and the internalisation of Christianity by a population. Furthermore, pre-Christian traditions were not antithetical to Christianity but often became creolised with elements of Christianity in new religious

traditions, while pre-Christian religions – especially animist ones – did not usually interact on an equal footing with Christianity.

Animist Reformations and Revivals

While the general tendency of pre-Christian religions in nineteenth-century Europe was to die out and fall into obscurity (even if they were mythologised and romanticised by some nationalists), native religious traditions among the animists of the Volga-Ural region went in the opposite direction. In contrast to the oppressive religious policy of Peter the Great a century earlier, by the early nineteenth century the Russian Empire no longer emphasised conversion to Russian Orthodoxy as an essential component of Russianness – provided there was no question of people's loyalty to the tsar. This more tolerant policy was aimed primarily at accommodating the Muslim population of Russian Central Asia, but the remaining animists of the Volga-Ural region did not hesitate in taking advantage of it, and began to reassert their traditions and openly repudiate baptism. For example, in 1808–10 the Erzian serf Kuz'ma Alekseev began a campaign of apocalyptic preaching, proclaiming that, 'Soon your Erzian faith will be raised and the Christian one lowered … The entire world will adopt Erzian ritual practice and clothing … Erzians will be free, belong to no estate owner, and pay no tax, for they will be the first among peoples'.

Alekseev drew hundreds to hear him preach and perform sacrifices; the affair even reached the ears of the tsar, who had Alekseev arrested. However, in a sign of

the regime's comparative disengagement from religious matters, Alekseev was later pardoned. With the exception of his opposition to Christianity, Alekseev's message was not much different from that of other apocalyptic peasant mystics of nineteenth-century Russia, who usually prophesied an end to serfdom and taxation. However, in reality Alekseev's protest marked the tail end of Mokshan and Erzian religion rather than a revival; the Mordvins became the first Finno-Ugric people of the region to thoroughly embrace Christianity, a process helped by the publication of an Erzian catechism (1806) and New Testament (in the 1820s), although the first Mokshan catechism (indeed, the first Mokshan book) did not appear until 1861.[33]

Around two-thirds of Udmurts remained unchristianised in the early nineteenth century, participating in sacrificial feasts and horse sacrifices either openly or secretly. In around 1830 four Orthodox missionaries went to Udmurtia, seeking written promises from the Udmurts that they would abandon pre-Christian practices; the illiterate Udmurts dutifully signed their names with a cross and carried on with their ancient traditions, and it was not until 1847 that the Gospels of St Matthew and St Mark appeared in the Udmurt language.[34] A particularly shameful episode in Russian colonialism occurred in 1892 when ten Udmurt animist priests from the village of Old Multan near Malmyzh were falsely accused of performing human sacrifices – an accusation that echoed the 'blood libels' levelled at Europe's Jewish communities since the

[33] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 166–7.
[34] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, pp. 268–9.

Middle Ages. After a series of three trials, seven of the Udmurt priests were sentenced to imprisonment. The incident reached the western European press, prompting shock at the continued existence of pre-Christian religions in Europe, but there was much sympathy for the 'Udmurt Seven' among the Russian Empire's intellectual elite.[35] The seven priests were released in 1896 after a successful press campaign led by the Ukrainian writer Vladimir Korolenko.[36] Yet in spite of this controversy, animism remained strong among the Udmurts as the twentieth century dawned, with 7.5 per cent of them declaring themselves to be unbaptised in the 1897 census (and of course many of those who were baptised were animists in their religious practice).

It was among the Maris, however, that traditional religion took the most unusual trajectory of all. Like the Mordvins and Udmurts, the Maris took advantage of the Russian Empire's relaxation of its policy of forcible conversion, and in 1827 and 1828 Mari animists held major ritual feasts accompanied by animal sacrifices.[37] Some of these sacrificial events were huge: in 1828, 3,000 people gathered at Ürzhüm, led by 99 *karts* (Mari priests) who sacrificed 99 horses, 99 cows, 99 sheep, and 99 chickens. Rumours spread that the tsar himself had endorsed the return of Maris to their ancestral religion. The church took some action in response to this mass sacrifice: *karts* were sent to St Petersburg for investigation, missionaries were sent to break a Mari holy stone, and the grove at the site of the burial of King Chumblat was cut down twice

[35] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 271.
[36] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 67.
[37] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 61.

following an imperial decree of 1835. By 1850, however, Mari animism had begun to take on proto-nationalist characteristics and was practised with increasing defiance.[38] The 1860s saw the intensification of efforts at Russification through education; for the Maris, who articulated their national identity through their distinctive religion, the abandonment of traditional religious practices represented a threat to their survival as a people. Anyone who abandoned animism was considered by the Maris to have become Russian and was therefore no longer part of the community.[39]

In 1877–8 the question of blood sacrifice was discussed at a gathering of representatives of different Mari religious traditions. As we have seen in the case of the sacrifice of 396 animals at Ürzhüm in 1828, sacrifice to *keremet'* (the Maris' sacred sites) often involved a large number of animals which the impoverished Maris could scarcely afford to spare. Although the gathering reached no agreement on the question of blood sacrifice, it does seem to have provided the impetus for one sect, led by Andrei Iakmanov, to abandon animal sacrifice altogether. Iakmanov's 'internal reformation' of Mari traditional religion involved replacing animal sacrifice with offerings of food and flowers, while a large candle burned throughout rituals; it was this feature of the cult that lent it the name Kugu sorta, 'Big Candle'. In addition to these ritual changes, Big Candle Mari animism emphasised purity of life and its followers wore white.[40]

[38] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 214.
[39] Werth, 'Big Candles', pp. 160–2.
[40] Werth, 'Big Candles', pp. 151–2; Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 215.

While Kugu sorta may have represented a Mari 'internal conversion' in response to Christianity, it can also be interpreted as a classic form of creolised religion. The Mari reformers emphasised a monotheistic interpretation of Mari traditional religion, with a strong emphasis on sin and repentance that was surely derived from Russian Orthodoxy. In Kugu sorta all offerings and prayers were directed to the supreme deity Jumo and the movement repudiated the worship of *keremet'* altogether. As the Mari petitioners to Tsar Alexander III declared in 1887, 'Truly we write that our Faith is [devoted] to Almighty God alone, and does not allow for the worship of any idol or object …'[41] Followers of Kugu sorta accepted large portions of the Old Testament and recognised Christ as a prophet, albeit repudiating his divinity (perhaps under the influence of Islam).[42] They recognised saints (without praying to them) and celebrated Christmas and Easter.[43] Indeed, the very act of animists petitioning the tsar, and presenting him with a detailed confession of their faith, represented a radical departure. According to Orthodox missionaries, Maris advocated a kind of religious pluralism, claiming that an 'Old Bible' existed which the Christians had corrupted, according to which God had given seventy-seven religions to the human race, each one of them acceptable to him.[44]

Iakmanov was determined to distance Kugu sorta from the secrecy that usually attended Mari religion, so in 1890 he openly presented the religion at the Kazan Scientific and Industrial Exhibition.[45] Iakmanov seems

[41] Werth, 'Big Candles', p. 153.
[42] Werth, 'Big Candles', p. 165.
[43] Werth, 'Big Candles', p. 166.
[44] Werth, 'Big Candles', p. 162.
[45] Werth, 'Big Candles', p. 154.

to have had a knack for promotion and, when his movement received medals and letters of thanks for participation in the exhibition, he presented these as marks of official approval for the Kugu sorta religion. He even went so far as to reference the commentary of the ethnographer of N. I. Smirnov in support of the merits of Mari religion – a remarkable and probably unique instance of unchristianised people in Europe turning the tables on an ethnographer by using ethnography to frame their own identity.[46] Rather like the Neoplatonists of late antiquity who chose to resist rather than adopt Christianity, the Mari followers of Kugu sorta sought to present their faith as superior to Christianity, offering the same elements of monotheism and righteousness – only better. However, in making his movement so publicly known to the authorities in the late 1880s and 1890s Iakmanov drew unwelcome attention, which resulted ultimately in the exile of the leaders of the movement to Siberia in 1893; on their return they reverted (at least in public) to Orthodox Christianity.[47]

Werth has argued that the development of Kugu sorta was a response to extreme poverty (hence the rejection of animal sacrifice) and environmental change; the late nineteenth century saw the deforestation of Mari El and thus the literal removal of the focus of the animist worship of a forest people.[48] The phenomenon of Kugu sorta, however short-lived, was a remarkable example of European animists assuming self-conscious agency in what was (in hindsight) a naïve belief that the tsarist

[46] Werth, 'Big Candles', p. 155.
[47] Werth, 'Big Candles', pp. 155–6.
[48] Werth, 'Big Candles', p. 158.

regime was on the verge of extending full religious toleration. In their petitions to the tsar the animists even offered a critique of the missionary policies of the Orthodox Church, declaring that their ancestors had been baptised by force or deceit and requesting the freedom to practise their religion without the interference of Orthodox clergy.[49] In Werth's view, the Kugu sorta movement 'represented religious synthesis and integration rather than cultural mosaic'.[50] In other words, it was a religious phenomenon that moved beyond syncretism and creolisation to become something more like Sikhism in the Indian Subcontinent, a wholly new religion that was developed in response to both Hinduism and Islam.

In the 1897 census an astonishing 27.6 per cent of Maris declared themselves to be animists, in spite of the fact that there were heavy penalties for apostasy (and many – perhaps most – Maris had technically been baptised by this point), leading Taagepera to suggest that the real number of animists at the end of the nineteenth century was much higher.[51] While Mari animism undoubtedly survived into the twentieth century, it is unclear how much it owed to Kugu sorta. The Soviet authorities repressed Mari religion even more aggressively than Christianity because it was associated with nationalism,[52] and contemporary Mari animism owes much to the post-Soviet revival begun by Iuri Andogonov in 1995.[53] Mari El's animists periodically receive attention in the media

[49] Werth, 'Big Candles', pp. 152–6. [50] Werth, 'Big Candles', p. 170.
[51] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 61.
[52] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 221.
[53] Taagepera, *Finno-Ugric Republics*, p. 216.

as 'Europe's last pagans',[54] but their religious status is a complex one. Iakmanov's 'animist revival' was not a reconstructionist revival of the twentieth-century type, but something closer to the popular Christian revivals of the nineteenth century – only in animist form.

In contrast to the Kugu sorta revival in Mari El, revivals in nineteenth-century Sápmi were decidedly Christian, but nevertheless contributed to the transmutation and survival of some elements of traditional Sámi belief. The key figure in these revivals was Lars Levi Laestadius (1800–1861), a Swedish Lutheran pastor of distant Sámi descent. Before he experienced his Pietist religious awakening in 1844, Laestadius had been a keen student of Sámi folklore, and he deployed this in his preaching. He shared with his Sámi listeners a literal understanding of the reality of figures of folk belief, such as the *gufihtar* (earth-dwellers), whom he denounced for their vanity, and the *stállu* (giant), which some Sámi claimed to have fought.[55]

Laestadius's message was that Christians should have nothing to do with these supernatural beings, but his decision to speak of them as if literal beings (even if his intention was to deploy them as metaphors or moral exempla) was treated by the Sámi as a validation of belief in their reality.[56] As Joel Robbins has argued, the 'rhetoric of opposition' created by missionaries and revivalists who emphasise the struggle against supernatural beings paradoxically results in the 'ontological

[54] On contemporary traditional religion in the Mari El Republic see Knorre, 'Neopaganism in the Mari El Republic', pp. 249–65.
[55] Enges, 'Supernatural Beings', pp. 225–7.
[56] Enges, 'Supernatural Beings', pp. 231–2.

preservation' of such beings.[57] Christian revivalist movements like Laestadianism thus preserved elements of the belief systems they opposed, since ecstatic spiritual movements tend to encourage a vividly spiritual outlook where the invisible world – both good and bad – is treated as thoroughly real. Unlike earlier Swedish and Norwegian missionaries who attempted in vain to impose a rationalist outlook on the Sámi, Laestadius's vividly supernatural preaching and message, born of personal knowledge of Sámi culture, allowed the Sámi to simultaneously internalise Christianity as their own faith while retaining an awareness of the supernatural world of their ancestors.[58]

Lingering Traces

The work of folklorists and ethnographers is a problematic source for the history of continuing pre-Christian practices in the nineteenth century. Rather than recording current practices and beliefs, folklorists often recorded practices said to have taken place, or beliefs said to have been held, at some unspecified time in the past. Folklore thus existed at an eternal vanishing point of oral memory, outside of historical time. Whether people interviewed in the nineteenth century attributed beliefs and practices to parents, grandparents, and unspecified ancestors out of embarrassment – or in an effort to present themselves as less 'superstitious' than their forbears – is often impossible to establish. But

[57] Robbins, 'Crypto-Religion', p. 421.

[58] On nineteenth-century Sámi religious revivals see also Kent, *Sámi Peoples*, pp. 110–12.

it was not uncommon for folklore collectors to come across living practices declared obsolete by other collectors – in part, perhaps, because such practices were highly regional and people were simply not aware of what others were still doing elsewhere in the country. It is really only at these moments, when folklore collectors described what was current, that we gain an insight into the lingering remnants of pre-Christian religion in the nineteenth century.

Heiki Valk has argued that the 'system of apartheid and ethnosocial segregation' that prevailed in Estonia until the abolition of serfdom in the early nineteenth century, separating Baltic Germans and Estonians into separate spheres of existence, effectively perpetuated the Middle Ages in Estonia longer than anywhere else.[59] The Estonians remained essentially the 'neophytes' under Baltic German religious tutelage they had been since the thirteenth century. Since there was little or no possibility of social mobility or economic advancement through conversion for Estonians who embraced Christianity – for Estonians could never become Baltic Germans – there was little incentive for them to culturally internalise Christianity. On the other hand, Ergo-Hart Västrik considers that 'the essentials of Christianity were generally accepted' among the Estonian peasantry by the nineteenth century, largely owing the influence of Pietism.[60] However, the significance of the *hiis* (sacred grove) remained, and offerings for healing at holy springs and other sites continued into the 1920s and 1930s; people would leave an offering at a

[59] Valk, 'Christianisation in Estonia, p. 572.
[60] Västrik, 'In Search of Genuine Religion', p. 133.

stone, for example, and then ritually 'transfer' their illness or infirmity to it by touching it.[61] Offerings were made on the 'sacrificial stone' inside the trunk of the sacred linden tree at Sipa into the nineteenth century.[62] Similarly, the custom of depositing grave goods with the dead for the next world survives to this day in some rural areas: coins, a needle, and some vodka may be placed with the corpse,[63] and Valk argues there was little archaeologically visible change in the treatment of the dead in Estonia between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries.[64]

In the mid-nineteenth century Estonian fishermen in Saaremaa would still thank the 'sea-mother' when their catch was abundant and successful,[65] while in the same period offerings to the herd gods (*kara-jumalâ*) were still being made in Võrumaa (southern Estonia).[66] In the Mulgimaa region of southern Estonia the cult of the domestic and granary spirit Pell survived into the second half of the nineteenth century; in 1958 an eighty-three-year-old woman recalled how an Orthodox priest had been summoned to exorcise Pell from a granary in Karksi parish when she was a child. The spirit sat 'like a completely naked person' on the steps of the granary, nursing an infant, before finally agreeing to depart.[67] However, it was the cult of the grain and fertility god Peko in the Setomaa region which proved one of the most persistent of all,

[61] Valk, 'Christianisation in Estonia', p. 574; Kõivupuu, 'Tradition in Landscape', p. 275.
[62] Kõivupuu, 'Tradition in Landscape', p. 278.
[63] Valk, 'Christianisation in Estonia', p. 575.
[64] Valk, 'Christianisation in Estonia', p. 578.
[65] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 87.
[66] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, p. 148.
[67] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, pp. 141–2.

perhaps because Peko was worshipped in secret by rural fraternities rather than by the whole community at large. These fraternities protected the cult image of Peko, which was kept in the grain bin of a member of the fraternity throughout the winter. In late August or early September the fraternities held 'Peko feasts' at which they engaged in ritual games. The 'priest' or 'master' of Peko (known as the *papp*) was chosen by combat at these events.[68]

The late survival of the cult of Peko compared with other pre-Christian beliefs might be accounted for by the fact that it took the form of a secret society; as Ronald Hutton has documented in Britain, 'diabolist' rural secret societies like the Society of the Horseman's Word perpetuated folk cults in a way that would not have been possible in rural society at large.[69] Although Christian revivalist movements finally began to encourage the Estonians to identify with Christianity in the nineteenth century, Jaanus Plaat has noted that pre-Christian beliefs remained strong in Läänemaa and Saaremaa, 'intertwining and influencing' revivalist movements.[70] Estonia was hardly unique in the continued importance of 'lower deities and fertility spirits' for nineteenth-century country-dwellers,[71] but a cult like that of Peko stands out from the fairy cults of other European nations because it was associated with a cult image.[72] However, just because the cult of Peko had apparently evaded Christianisation, we cannot assume that

[68] Paulson, *Old Estonian Folk Religion*, pp. 112–17.
[69] Hutton, *Triumph of the Moon*, rev. ed., pp. 63–5.
[70] Plaat, 'Religious Movements', p. 171.
[71] Valk, 'Christianisation in Estonia', p. 576.
[72] Johanson and Jonuks, 'Are We Afraid of Magic?', p. 206, call Peko a 'fertility fairy', a problematic and conceptually loaded choice of term.

it was particularly ancient. Some practices associated with pre-Christian cults in earlier times assumed new meanings in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the deposition of coins, for example, became a habit of tourists and lost its ritual significance, meaning the proliferation of Soviet-era coins at many Estonian sites cannot be taken as a sign of any kind of lingering pre-Christian beliefs.[73]

While the continuing significance of sacred sites in nineteenth-century Estonia is both documented and evidenced by archaeology, evidence for the continuing veneration of sacred rocks and trees in Latvia and Lithuania into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is fragmentary and often found in the papers of individual local historians.[74] In January 1927 a report was made to Latvia's Board of Monuments that an old man had been seen killing a black cockerel near a sacred stone at Pinnas, near Ulmale; the man then allegedly made a fire on top of the stone and burnt the cockerel – but it is unclear whether (if this event really happened) it should be treated as an act of magic or of religion.[75] In the 1970s archaeological investigations of the stone of Šaukliai in Lithuania found signs of burning and pottery sherds dating from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, suggesting continuity of sacrificial offerings over a long period.[76] In Radviliškis district people were still chipping away parts of the sacred stone of Paežeriai for use in the treatment of eye complaints in 1929.[77]

[73] Jonuks and Äikäs, 'Contemporary Deposits', p. 14.
[74] Vaitkevičius, *Studies into the Balts' Sacred Places*, p. 4.
[75] Urtāns, 'Cylindrical Ritualistic Stones', p. 50.
[76] Vaitkevičius, *Studies into the Balts' Sacred Places*, p. 29.
[77] Vaitkevičius, *Studies into the Balts' Sacred Places*, p. 28.

Similarly, in nineteenth-century Sápmi stories circulated about the bad luck that befell people who insulted or took offerings from a *sieidi*, and in some places offerings were still deposited; in 1904 a boy passing the 'Falcon Stone', an unusual rock formation in Finnmark, noted many antlers in the cracks of the rock as well as portions of two reindeer calves that were still fresh.[78] Swedish antiquarians and ethnographers continued to 'collect' *sieididi* from remote locations and add them to museum collections in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the 1890s Artur Hazelius, the founder of the Skansen open-air museum in Stockholm, sent collectors to Sápmi with the specific aim of collecting *sieididi*.[79] It is unclear whether these *sieididi* were still active focusses of worship at the time; but, as we have seen, the *sieidi* could retain significance as part of a kind of 'legacy religion' in Sápmi even if it was no longer an active cultic site.

Some of the most compelling evidence for the persistence of pre-Christian or creolised cults into the nineteenth century can be found in instances of people responding to contemporary social developments via an apparently pre-Christian worldview. If Edmund Veckenstedt is to be believed, Samogitians in the nineteenth century introduced a new goddess, Kolera: a woman in a white dress who travelled the country in a coach bringing cholera.[80] Similarly, Latvians added 'Mother of Tobacco' at some point to the number of divine mothers.[81] Indeed, it is possible that the Latvian

[78] Spangen and Äikäs, 'Sacred Nature', pp. 125–6.
[79] Silvén, 'Contested Sami Heritage', pp. 181–3.
[80] Veckenstedt, *Mythen, Sagen und Legenden*, vol. 1, pp. 248–9.
[81] *LBM*, p. 126.

mātes as a whole (of whom there are at least 115) represent a creolised response to Christianity – perhaps a reaction to the suppression of the cult of the Virgin Mary at the Reformation, when local expressions and functions of the Virgin in Estonian popular Christianity became fragmented and personified as distinct characters. What is remarkable about the Latvian *mātes* is that they do not exist in Lithuanian folklore, in spite of the close linguistic, cultural, and mythological ties between the two nations. Latvian scholars have typically explained this anomaly in terms of the synthetic nature of Latvian culture, created in a ferment of contact between Balts and Finno-Ugric peoples such as the Livs. The strongest evidence for this hypothesis is that divine 'mothers' dealing with different areas of life can also be found among the Finno-Ugric Mordvins, but such mothers are not a major feature of the folklore of the neighbouring Estonians. Overall, the possibility that the *Mātes* were a creative Latvian response to a changing world seems more probable – an indication not only that pre-Christian religion still existed, but that it was evolving and innovating.

Conclusion

One of the paradoxes of the revaluation of the pagan past in the nineteenth century was that less was known about the pre-Christian religions of nations in which pre-Christian belief had disappeared only recently than was known about countries like Greece, Italy, Ireland, or Scandinavia. Here, while paganism belonged to the distant past, it was extensively recorded in ancient literature. But the pre-Christian Estonian religion, by contrast, remains

extremely elusive – in spite of the fact that Estonia has a strong claim to being the last European nation where active pre-Christian cults survived. This is not as illogical as it might seem; the later the date to which pre-Christian religions survived, the more marginal and marginalised they became, with the consequence that their adherents became less and less willing to talk about them – like the taciturn Sámi encountered by Giuseppe Acerbi. Europe's pre-Christian religions died in silence and when, a generation or two later, folklorists began to seek out the remnants of these religions among the descendants of their last adherents, they were often told what they wanted to hear. Or, just as unhelpfully (from the historian's point of view, anyway), they were given general information about folklore and pre-Christian practices that was rooted in no specific time period, thus obscuring the historicity of these religions and the question of how they actually came to an end.

The consequence of this silence was that scholarly and religious interest in pre-Christian religions among romantic nationalists often rested on shaky foundations. The revived Estonian cult of the thunder god Taara, for instance, was based on a single word in the chronicle of Henry of Livonia.[82] Furthermore, those eager to re-evaluate imagined national religions sometimes distorted them, portraying them as monotheistic faiths where the gods were mere symbols, or bringing them conceptually into line with Christianity or with eastern religions. Ultimately, nineteenth-century interest in 'native faiths' was not so much a religious as a nation-building project;

[82] Misāne, 'Inter-War Right-Wing Movements', p. 79 n.18.

the ambiguity of the medieval sources on pre-Christian religions made it possible for romantic nationalists to imagine those religions as they chose. For some they were a purer, Indigenous version of Christianity; for others, they were a form of proto-secularism and anti-colonialism. The end result was that nineteenth-century scholars were as often involved in processes of invention as they were in recovery. The nineteenth century remains to this day a distorting lens through which Europe's unchristianised peoples are often still viewed – compounding the difficulties of interpretation already thrown up by the religious biases of pre-nineteenth-century sources written entirely by Christians.

Epilogue

Pre-Christian, Post-Christian?

This book has made the case for looking at the last phase of pre-Christian religions in Europe, from the conversion of Lithuania in 1387 up to around 1900, in a new way. We should approach these religions not as 'paganism' (understood as religious relics or survivors in opposition to Christianity), but as a complex continuum of newly fashioned creolised religions that synthesised elements of Christianity and traditional ritual practices. These creole religions have been largely invisible up to now because ethnographers and antiquarians mistakenly interpreted them as the original pre-Christian religions of Europe's unchristianised peoples, failing to recognise (or wilfully ignoring) their 'Christianesque' character. The pre-Christian religions found at Christendom's margins in the five centuries after the conversion of Lithuania were neither pristine ancient survivals nor resistance movements to Christianity. They were, rather, creative responses to Christianity and the religious 'vacuum' left behind by missionaries to remote regions who destroyed and undermined traditional religions but left communities without the doctrinal and pastoral resources to understand or properly identify with the Christian faith. From Sápmi to Lithuania, and from Estonia to the Volga, unchristianised peoples

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.011

responded creatively to this religious crisis by devising ritual practices that served the needs of their communities: a kind of 'found religion' that made use of readily available sources of the sacred.

This interpretation of the religious development of early modern Europe's unchristianised peoples is a hypothesis and must remain so – for the simple reason that we have so little information on the religions of these peoples before their contact with Christianity that there is no 'control group' of well-evidenced pre-contact religion to which we can compare post-contact religions. However, the widespread presence of 'Christianesque' elements in the religious practices of unchristianised peoples in this period renders an interpretation of these religions as creolised phenomena the most plausible one: what Gouguenheim has called 'a paganism altered, but not completely dead'.[1] Since the nineteenth century, the appeal of paganism as the survival of something ancient has dominated the historiography of northern Europe's pre-Christian religions, leading to polarisation among historians adhering to 'minimalist' and 'maximalist' conceptions of the 'paganness' of early modern Europe. For the minimalists, paganism was a chimera created by Christians eager to enforce their own version of a 'perfect' Christianity; the alleged 'pagans' were merely demonised adherents of folk Christianity. For the maximalists, not only was paganism a living and powerful force that defined itself against Christianity, but most ordinary Christians were pagans at heart as well, giving only lip service to the church.

[1] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 250.

Both the hermeneutical extremes of 'no-one-was-pagan' minimalism and 'everyone-was-pagan' maximalism are lazy historiographies. They allow the historian to abdicate the responsibility of tackling the difficult question of who was and was not Christianised in late medieval and early modern Europe, taking refuge instead in glib generalisations predetermined by theory. But religious change, and the transition of a pre-Christian society to a Christian one, is a process that the historian must try to understand – since the basic fact that these societies began as unchristianised and ended up (in most cases) as identifiably Christian is incontrovertible. The question this book has sought to unravel is what happened between those two states of religiosity. In one sense, it is true that pre-Christian religion dissolves on contact with Christianity, because Christianity introduces a way of thinking about religion and religiosity more self-conscious than anything that exists in most non-literate pre-Christian societies, where the concept of religion as a distinct sphere of life may not even exist. Even if it somehow reconstitutes itself, pre-Christian religion will never be the same again. As Paul Werth has observed of the Mari animist revival, 'The range of possible ways of thinking and indeed acting was structured in ways logically independent of the consciousness of the [Maris] themselves',[2] resulting in a revived religion that, paradoxically, mirrored the Russian Orthodox Christianity it sought to defy.

On the other hand, the evidence recorded by missionaries, antiquarians, and ethnographers suggests that the religions of Europe's unchristianised peoples, even if

[2] Werth, 'Big Candles', p. 164.

touched and possibly even transformed by Christianity, did not usually define themselves in opposition to it. Such peoples' contact with Christianity was sporadic, resulting in the religious equivalent of a Przewalski's horse – the 'wild' horses of the Eurasian steppe that are probably the descendants of ancient groups of domesticated horses, but who act to all intents and purposes like a wild species. The creolised religions that developed subsequent to contact with Christianity among Europe's unchristianised peoples were functionally pre-Christian just as Przewalski's horse is functionally a wild animal. And just as it would not be meaningful to describe Przewalski's horse as 'domesticated' just because it had distant domesticated ancestors, so it is not meaningful to call creole religions 'Christian' just because they draw creatively on elements from Christianity. Creole religions operate independently of Christianity, regardless of what they may owe to it.

The range of possible responses to the arrival of Christianity in a society is diverse and need not be confined to a dichotomy of total acceptance or utter rejection. Hostility to the clergy and the hierarchies of the church might be combined with curiosity about Christianity itself and interest in the potential of new rituals and a new deity as sources of sacred power. People might choose to adopt the figures of Christ and the saints, but repudiate the missionaries who brought them and develop their own stories about the holy figures of the Christian faith. Similarly, in the absence of clergy, and without adequate catechisation, people might think it reasonable to sacrifice animals and foodstuffs as a poor yet necessary substitute for the sacrifice of the mass to

which they did not have access, or to continue their customary sacrifices but perform them at Christian rather than pre-Christian holy sites.

Stones with cup marks in Finland, Karelia, Estonia, and Latvia that are known to have been used since the Bronze Age and into the twentieth century for ritual offerings may represent Europe's longest continuously functioning ritual sites, even if their meaning and significance changed over time. There is a sense in which Europe's last unchristianised peoples were indeed representatives of the Continent's deep religious past. But they were also innovators, people with their own agency who were capable of responding creatively to the crisis created by colonisation and externally imposed religious change. We do these peoples a disservice if we wilfully misrepresent their religions as something they were not, for our own ideological ends. Europe's unchristianised peoples were not just 'bad Christians', nor were they primordial pagans helplessly oppressed by the Christian church. They were people with the same need to engage with the spiritual aspect of human existence as anyone else, yet their social, political, historical, and geographical circumstances made it necessary for them to innovate with limited resources – cut off as they were from both reliable Christian pastoral support and from their own original pre-Christian traditions.

This book has, I hope, raised challenging questions about the nature of human religiosity by examining an aspect of Europe's religious history rarely considered by historians. Unlike the 'revealed' religions of Europe, based on a set of holy scriptures and with their own religious laws (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and arguably

even the Tibetan Buddhism of the Kalmyks), Europe's pre-Christian religions are best characterised as 'found religions' both in their untouched and creolised states. They are religions whose beliefs and practices (mainly practices, for it remains unclear if we can say much for certain about their beliefs) are devised at need against the background of broad cultural assumptions about the sacred. The Sámi veneration of unusual rock formations, the Lithuanians' attraction to large and ancient trees, the Estonian interest in cup-marked stones, and the Maris' love for worshipping in the forest are all examples. However, while pre-existing traditions were undoubtedly important, we should also consider the possibility that people seeking the sacred in a particular environment are likely to seize upon similar notions. It is not surprising that nature is sacred to people who depend directly on the cycle of the seasons and the fertility of the land for life; it is not surprising that trees and the forest are sacred to the populations of heavily forested regions; and it is not surprising that unusual features in a landscape that deviate from its usual geology, such as glacial erratics, become sacralised. By the same token, when environments changed, religious behaviour was affected: the cutting down of sacred forests and the felling of sacred trees, the destruction of holy stones, the disappearance of animal species, and the arrival of new ways of life (like the Sámi transition to reindeer husbandry in the late Middle Ages). Environment did not determine religion, but in a 'found religion' the landscape and environment in which people live surely affects what they deem sacred.

Whether animism, the tendency to interact with non-human beings as persons, is the most fundamental

state of human 'religiosity' is a question beyond the capacity of the historian to answer. But one of the characteristics of the pre-Christian religions considered in this book is an urge to personify concepts and things, from the Sámi's personification of the twelve days of Christmas as the 'Christmas people' to the Latvians' personification of over a hundred aspects of life as divine 'mothers'. It is possible to argue that, within Christian worldviews, saints simply took on this role of personifications and there is a long tradition of historians arguing that Europe's Christianised peasants retained an animist mentality. But while it may be true that the pre-modern Christian peasant was as much infused with a completely vitalist conception of the universe as their pagan neighbour,[3] there remained a difference. A Christian might attribute power to magic, nature spirits, fortune, or chance in a manner inconsistent with the providentialism taught by the church, but thorough Christianisation severed people from their culture's pre-Christian religious traditions through a process of collective forgetting. It was only the unchristianised (among whom I include the partially Christianised) who remained close enough to their pre-Christian traditions to engage in rites such as sacrifice to named deities at pre-Christian holy sites, even if their religious practices contained 'Christianesque' elements such as a role for the consecrated host, the Virgin Mary, and the saints.

The transition from 'found' to 'revealed' religions has sometimes been seen in teleological terms – an inevitable result of the growing complexity of society in the modern

[3] Gouguenheim, *Les derniers païens*, p. 192.

world. As Michael Khodarkovsky has put it, 'in the face of modernization the natives feel the need for a more coherent doctrine and more rational beliefs'.[4] The idea that 'traditional' religions can be contrasted with 'rational' ones can be traced back to Max Weber, who argued that as the physical-concrete realm (such as nature and the landscape) becomes disenchanted, people seek a 'nucleate' concept of the divine that is more transcendent and may be based on a revelation and a more systematic formulation of beliefs than 'traditional' religions, which respond in a 'piecemeal' way to issues as they arise. One of several difficulties with this approach is that it treats 'traditional' religions as fixed, inflexible, and rather helpless in the face of the arrival of revealed religion. The evidence presented in this book suggests the opposite: pre-Christian religious traditions were adaptable and capable of innovation.

Furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that pre-Christian traditions of belief and ritual could not exist alongside adoption of the Christian faith – animism and religious allegiance, for instance, sometimes functioned as discreet components of people's belief systems, co-existing without conflict. If pre-Christian religions were 'unsophisticated' in comparison with 'world religions', this is belied by the apparent capacity of animism and shamanism to co-exist alongside other religious beliefs within pluralist societies – indeed, to do so rather more successfully than the 'confessional' religions. As Raisa Toivo has argued, understanding the co-existence of different religious traditions in medieval and early modern Finland might point to potential patterns for

[4] Khodarkovsky, 'Not by Word Alone', p. 268.

dealing with religious pluralism in the contemporary world.[5] Looking back on what came before Christendom can perhaps offer us a hint of what comes after it.

The idea that there was more religious diversity in the past than the traditional narrative of Christian Europe allows is an appealing one, because it lets us see in the past a mirror for our own multi-faith society. Similarly, the idea that people in medieval Christendom could choose alternative belief systems is comforting because it can make them seem more like the many people in contemporary Europe who dwell in a religious and spiritual marketplace rather than submitting to predetermined socially sanctioned religious expectations. We should be cautious in making facile comparisons between pre-Christian and post-Christian Europe, which are clearly very different societies – but it is hard not to see a mirror to our own pluralist societies in fourteenth-century Lithuania, for example, where a 'pagan' state cult allowed the co-existence of different kinds of monotheists.

If the religious diversity of pre-Christian Europe reflects contemporary realities, the decline of Christianity in modern Europe has some similarities to the decline of pre-Christian religions that this book documents. Like pre-Christian religions between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, contemporary European Christianity is still very much in existence, and in some places vibrant and strong, but it has been politically neutralised and is in demographic decline (outside of immigrant communities). Furthermore, Christianity now functions in many European societies more like a 'legacy religion' than an

[5] Toivo, *Faith and Magic*, p. 146.

active faith; a valued part of the nation's heritage whose sacred sites are treasured, but in whose rituals most people have no intention of actually taking part – rather like the treasured yet abandoned collections of antlers at Sámi sacred sites in the nineteenth century. There is even an argument to be made that the mainline Christian denominations have absorbed secularist and humanist assumptions in a manner not dissimilar to the creolisation of Europe's pre-Christian religions in a former age. Christianity may be responding to crisis like the religions it once replaced, by seeking to integrate the ideas that threaten to destroy it. And, like pre-Christian religions in the early modern period, Christianity will perhaps survive at the margins of European life for centuries yet, but it seems on the way to forfeiting its status as the Continent's dominant belief system.

The question that confronts the descendants of Europe's last unchristianised peoples is what to make of their enigmatic religious inheritance in a world that is now not only post-pagan, but increasingly post-Christian as well. The cultural revaluation of history in the nineteenth century removed any shame or stigma from those European countries who received Christianity late and the memory (confected, confabulated, or otherwise) of the pre-Christian past became instead a rallying point for resistance to imperialism, colonisation, and cultural erasure. Such concerns remain very much alive today; Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, for instance, sharpened the Baltic states' sense of an identity articulated in opposition to Russification. In Scandinavia, meanwhile, the ongoing return of Sámi sacred artefacts to the Sámi people is part of a wider reckoning with the

Scandinavian kingdoms' historic repression of Sámi culture. In 2022 Queen Margrethe II of Denmark returned the rune drum confiscated from Anders Povelsen in 1692 (see Chapter 4),[6] but many more drums and *sieididi* remain in collections outside Sápmi.

Not all contemporary Sámi people would identify with Sámi religious traditions or with Sámi 'neo-shamanism', but in 2013 the county governor of Troms in Norway granted the status of a religious community to the Sjamanistisk Forbund (Shamanic Association), which trains officiants for marriages, naming ceremonies, and other rites of passage.[7] However, identification with pre-Christian religious and spiritual traditions is not a simple matter of adherence, or co-extensive with paid-up membership of neo-pagan religious organisations. In the Mari El Republic, for instance, in 2006 only 2.5 per cent of citizens were unbaptised adherents of Mari traditional religion, but a further 11.5 per cent adhered to both Russian Orthodoxy and traditional faith together.[8] One 2018 study reported that as many as 20 per cent of Latvians identified with 'Latvian faith',[9] although what 'identification' means here is open to interpretation. Committed (registered) adherents of Latvian Dievturiba remain tiny in number (between 600 and 800 people in 2010[10]), but the cultural acceptability of a 'pagan' identity

[6] Higgins, 'Three Centuries On'.
[7] Kraft, 'Sámi Neo-Shamanism', pp. 28–9.
[8] Knorre, 'Neopaganism in the Mari El Republic', p. 251. It should be noted that the designation 'Mari traditional faith' makes no distinction between monotheistic beliefs developing from the Kugu sorta movement and more traditional Mari animism.
[9] Nastevics, 'Latvian Religion', pp. 82–104.
[10] Ozoliņš, 'Dievturi Movement', p. 95.

in contemporary Latvia was underlined when Raimonds Vējonis, president of Latvia 2015–19, declared his religious affiliation as 'pagan'.[11] In Estonia, meanwhile, 51 per cent of respondents polled in 2010 declared their support for Estonia's revived native faith movement, while a further 37 per cent declared positive feelings towards it, indicating that a large majority of Estonians may be open to the idea of Estonia as a pagan nation.[12]

In Lithuania, there were between 2,000 and 20,000 people practising the revived pagan religion of Romuva in 2007,[13] but at the time of writing Romuva has so far failed to gain official recognition from the state as a religious group.[14] However, Lithuanians' attitude to Romuva is rather paradoxical; groups associated with the movement often take part in official and semi-official state and regional events, performing music and dance inspired by pre-Christian Lithuanian culture, yet the idea of Romuva existing as a distinct *religion* is more controversial – a reflection, perhaps, of Lithuania's uniqueness among the Baltic states in identifying strongly with one particular type of Christianity. However, adherents of Romuva themselves consider all Lithuanians to be unwitting inheritors of the pagan tradition and thus the actual number of adherents of Romuva is a secondary issue to them.[15] This attitude, which Ergo-Hart Västrik calls 'virtual inclusion',[16] sets 'native faith movements' apart

[11] Strmiska, 'Pagan Politics', p. 20.
[12] Västrik, 'In Search of Genuine Religion', pp. 142–3.
[13] Pranskevičiūtė, 'Contemporary Paganism Practices', p. 79.
[14] BNS, 'Neo-Pagans Not Granted State Recognition in Lithuania'.
[15] Pranskevičiūtė, 'Contemporary Paganism Practices', p. 79.
[16] Västrik, 'In Search of Genuine Religion', p. 143.

from other forms of neo-paganism, whose emphasis is often on initiation and membership, after the pattern of ancient mystery religions. In native faiths, by contrast, every member of the nation is potentially (and perhaps secretly, at heart) an adherent of a faith that is intimately identified with the nation itself.

The concepts of adherence to and membership of a religion are, of course, drawn from the confessional faiths; they were originally without meaning in Europe's pre-Christian religions. As Pavel Horák has argued, using a conceptual framework derived from Christianity – which is also broadly the same conceptual framework used by neo-pagan and native faith movements – leaves the reality of pre-Christian religion forever inaccessible, because the theological questions we are asking about it are conditioned by Christianity rather than the concerns of pre-Christian peoples.[17] However, the slow rate at which neo-pagan movements attract new adherents, and the mismatch between their small number of adherents and the broad sympathy for them within a nation's wider culture, may be an indication that 'confessional' neo-pagan faiths of the twentieth-century kind are merely a transitional stage in a nation's collective identification with its pre-Christian heritage – a kind of 'neo-pagan parenthesis' between the Christian and post-Christian eras. Within that parenthesis, revived paganism was a self-consciously 'paganesque' movement, defining itself against Christianity and buying into Christian conceptual categories of religiosity.

However, as European societies' cultural Christianity recedes into history and is no longer actively remembered,

[17] Horák, 'The Image of Paganism', p. 147.

it is possible that a new kind of post-Christian 'pagan' religiosity could emerge which is no longer in dialogue with Christianity. Rather than a 'pagan revival', this could be a 'pagan reinstantiation' where animist and/or polytheist religions develop spontaneously from people's lived experience – and especially their lived experience of the natural world. Whereas the driver for the revaluation (and eventual revival) of paganism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was nationalism, an increasingly dominant strand in contemporary 'native faith' revivals is environmentalism. In Estonia, for example, the Maausulised movement has deployed ecological discourses in order to protect 'historical sacred natural sites' from destruction and development – and not only as a pretext for a religious agenda, but as an integral part of Estonians' self-understanding of their ancestral religion as a religion of nature.[18] Just as nationalism was a transformation of the ways in which we conceptualised the relationships between people groups, so a return to religions of nature might represent a profound reconceptualisation of the relationship between human beings and the natural world – a spiritual realignment that some see as not only culturally desirable, but practically essential for the continued survival of our species.

It is also possible that new creole religions could emerge (and are arguably already emerging), born of the fusion of elements of established religions with 'conspirituality', fandoms, and a religious awe arising from digital systems and artificial intelligences too complex for most people to understand – like the 'technoutopianism'

[18] Västrik, 'In Search of Genuine Religion', p. 145.

and 'neogaianism' that exist in tension in Luca Ozzano and Giorgi Alberta's imagined religious landscape of the twenty-second century.[19] But if a kind of reinstantiated paganism, 'neo-animism', or 'found religion' might emerge in the future, unburdened by the categories and conceptual strictures of the past, this raises the question of whether the decay and eventual obsolescence of a revealed religion like Christianity results in human beings reverting to 'found religion' as a matter of course. Is there, in other words, an animist or polytheist bedrock to human religiosity – as Emma Wilby argued – that will presumably be revealed once more when Christianity in Europe reaches a certain point of decline? Does that fundamental animism struggle to reassert itself when other constraints of beliefs are removed?

The historian Tom Holland offers an alternative perspective that dampens such a prospect, arguing that the values and conceptual architecture of Christianity so permeate contemporary European secular society – for secularism itself is merely a de-spiritualised iteration of Christianity – that escape from it is essentially inconceivable. In the twenty-first century, 'the trace elements of Christianity continued to infuse people's morals and presumptions so utterly that many failed even to detect their presence'.[20] If Holland is right, then post-Christian Europe is unable to believe the dogmas of Christianity – and is thus cut off from its Christian religious heritage – and yet is also unable to return to its pre-Christian past. The non-religious religion of secularism persists not

[19] Ozzano and Giorgi, 'World Religions', pp. 309–23.
[20] Holland, *Dominion*, p. 517.

because people particularly want it or earnestly believe in it, but because it is all Europe has left. Indeed, going beyond Holland's thesis, we might ask whether secularism has stunted or destroyed among Europeans the human capacity to engage with the religious impulse that is found abundantly in other cultures? Have Europeans, in other words, socially and psychologically engineered themselves to be resistant to religion?

Yet if there is anything to be learnt from the history of religion, it is that human religiosity is full of surprises. The trends we think we detect in contemporary religion and belief may not be a reliable guide to the future. 'Pagan' outlooks and spiritualities may remain marginal; secularism may strengthen its grip, rather than being replaced by a 'post-secular' society; and religious belief of every kind may decline. But Christianity in Europe might also revive – after all, it has done so before. Ecstatic populist revivals are hard to predict, precisely because they come from below and bypass the condescension of cultural and intellectual elites. Yet understanding the true complexity and diversity of Europe's religious past can prepare us for an uncertain and unmapped religious future, even if Europe's pre-Christian past remains always just beyond the reach of our knowledge – our curiosity forever frustrated by the silence of the gods.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Acerbi, Giuseppe, *Travels through Sweden, Finland, and Lapland, to the North Cape, in the Years 1798 and 1799* (London: Joseph Mawman, 1802), 2 vols

Ališauskas, Vytautas (ed.), *Baltų Religijos ir Mitologijos Reliktai Lietuvos Didžioje Kunigaikštystejė (XIV–XVIII a.): Šaltinių Rinkinys* (Vilnius: Lietuvių Katalikų Mokslo Akademija, 2016)

Almeida, Manuel Lopes de, Costa Brochado, Idalino Ferreira da and António Dinis (eds), *Monumenta Henricina* (Coimbra: Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do V Centenário da Morte do Infante D. Henrique, 1960–73), 15 vols

Álvarez-Pedrosa, Juan Antonio (ed.), *Sources of Slavic Pre-Christian Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2021)

Anglicus, Bartholomaeus, (ed. M. C. Seymour), *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, De Proprietatibus Rerum: A Critical Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975–88), 3 vols

Bekker, Balthasar, *The World Bewitch'd: An Examination of the Common Opinions Concerning Spirits* (London: R. Baldwin, 1695)

Bontier, Pierre and Le Verrier, Jean (eds), *The Canarian* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1872)

Bzowski, Abraham, *Propago divi Hyacinthi thaumaturgi Poloni* (Venice: Apud Societatem Minimum, 1606)

Celichowski, Zygmunt (ed.), *Cronica conflictus Wladislai regis Poloniae cum cruciferis anno Christi 1410* (Poznań: Biblioteka Kórnickiej, 1911)

de Espinosa, Alonso, (ed. Clements Markham), *The Guanches of Tenerife, the Holy Image of Our Lady of Candelaria, and the*

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.012

Spanish Conquest and Settlement, by the Friar Alonso de Espinosa (London: Hakluyt Society, 1907)

Einhorn, Paul, *Reformatio gentis Letticae in Ducatu Curlandiae* (Riga: Gerhard Schröder, 1636)

Einhorn, Paul, *Historia Lettica* (Johann Vogeln: Dorpat [Tartu], 1649)

Ekrem, Inger and Mortensen, Lars Boje (eds), *Historia Norwegie* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2003)

Grønlie, Siân (trans.), *Íslendingabók, Kristni Saga: The Book of the Icelanders, The Story of the Conversion* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2006)

Grunau, Simon (ed. M. Perlbach), *Preussische Chronik* (Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot, 1875–96), 3 vols

Guagnini, Alessandro, *Sarmatiae Europeae descriptio, quae regnum Poloniae, Lituaniam, Samogitiam, Russiam, Masoviam, Prussiam, Pomeraniam, Livoniam, et Moschoviae, Tartariaeque partem complectitur* (Speyer: Bernardus Alsinus, 1581)

Hakluyt, Richard, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (London: George Bishop, 1599)

Hartknoch, Christoph, *Selectae dissertationes historicae de variis rebus Prussicis* (Jena: Hallervordius, 1679)

Hussovianus, Nicolaus (ed. Ioannus Pelczar), *Nicolai Hussoviani carmina* (Kraków: Typis Universitatis Jagellonicae, 1894)

Hussovianus, Nicolaus (ed. and trans. Frederick J. Booth), *Song of the Bison: Text and Translation of Nicolaus Hussovianus's 'Carmen de statura, feritate ac venatione bisontis'* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2019)

Klempin, Robert (ed.), *Pommersches Urkundbuch: Band I* (Stettin: Königlichen Staats-Archiv zu Stettin, 1868)

Kromer, Martin, *De origine et rebus gestis Polonorum libri xxx* (Basel: Joannes Operinus, 1555)

Łasicki, Jan (ed. and trans. Vytautas Ališauskas), *Jono Lasickio Pasakojimas apie Žemaičių Dievus* (Vilnius: Aidai, 2012)

Markham, Clements R. (ed.), *The Journal of Christopher Columbus* (London: Hackluyt Society, 1893)

Magnus, Olaus, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (Antwerp: Joannes Bellerus, 1562)

Münster, Sebastian, *Cosmographiae universalis libri VI* (Basel: Henricus Petri, 1554)

Peucer, Caspar, *Commentarius de praecipuis generibus divinationum* (Wittenberg: Joannes Lufft, 1580)

Prätorius, Matthäus (ed. William Pierson), *Deliciae Prussicae* (Berlin: A. Duncker, 1871)

Rabikauskas, Paulius (ed.), *Relationes status dioecesium in Magno Ducatu Lituaniae* (Rome: Academia Lituana Catholica Scientiarum, 1971)

Radwan, Jan, *Radivilias, sive de vita, et rebus praeclarissime gestis, immortalis memoriae, illustrissimi principis Nicolai Radivili* (Vilnius: Ex Officia Joannis Kartzani, 1592)

Royzius, Petrus (ed. B. Kruczkiewicz), *Petri Royzii Maurei Alcagnicensis Carmina, Pars II* (Kraków: Typis Universitatis Jagellonicae, 1900)

Schefferus, Johannes, *Lapponia, id est, regionis Lapponum et gentis nova et verissima descriptio* (Frankfurt: Christian Wolff, 1673)

Veckenstedt, Edmund, *Die Mythen, Sagen und Legenden der Zamaiten* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1883), 2 vols

Vėlius, Norbertas (ed.), *Baltų Religijos ir Mitologijos Šaltiniai* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir Enciclopedijų Leidykla, 1996–2005), 4 vols

Viera y Clavijo, José de, *Noticias de la historia general de las Islas de Canaria* (Madrid: La Imprenta de Blas Román, 1772)

Viera y Clavijo, José de, *Noticias de la historia general de las Islas de Canaria: Tomo Quarto* (Madrid: La Imprenta de Blas Román, 1783)

Włodkowic, Paweł (ed. Paul W. Knoll and Charles S. Kraszewski), *Writings (1416–1432): The Struggle for the Self-Determination of Central Europe* (Rome: Angelicum University Press, 2023)

Young, Francis (ed.), *Pagans in the Early Modern Baltic: Sixteenth-Century Ethnographic Accounts of Baltic Paganism* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2022)

Young, Francis (ed.), *Poetry and Nation-Building in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Three Early Modern Latin Epics* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2024)

Ziegler, Jacob, *Quae intus continentur Syria*, *Palestina*, *Arabia*, *Aegyptus*, *Schondia*, *Holmiae*, *etc*. (Strasbourg: Peter Schoeffer, 1532)

Secondary Sources

Adler, Margot, *Drawing Down the Moon* (New York: Viking, 1979)

Äikäs, Tiina and Salmi, Anna-Kaisa, 'North/South Encounters at Sámi Sacred Sites in Northern Finland', *Historical Archaeology* 49:3 (2015): 90–109

Aitamurto, Kaarina and Simpson, Scott (eds), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (Durham: Acumen, 2013)

Almagor, Eran and Skinner, Joseph (eds), *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013)

Álvarez-Pedrosa, Juan Antonio and Marinas, Enrique Santos, *Rituals in Slavic Pre-Christian Religion: Festivals*, *Banqueting*, *and Divination* (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2023)

Anaya, S. James, *Indigenous Peoples in International Law*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Andreassen, Bengt-Ove and Olsen, Torjer A., '"Sami Religion" in Sámi Curricula in RE in the Norwegian School System: An Analysis of the Importance of Terms', in Trude A. Fonneland and Tiina Äikäs (eds), *Sámi Religion: Religious Identities*, *Practices and Dynamics* (Basel: MDPI, 2020), pp. 67–82

Arik, Durmuş, 'Islam among the Chuvashes and Its Role in the Change of Chuvash Ethnicity', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 27:1 (2007): 37–54

Arukask, Madis, 'Sorcery, Holiness, the Third Sex – The Role of Herdsman in Finnic and North Russian Folk Culture', in Ülo Valk and Daniel Sävborg (eds), *Storied and Supernatural Places: Studies in Spatial and Social Dimensions of Folklore and Sagas* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2018), pp. 159–80

Baár, M. and Baár, M., *Historians and Nationalism: East Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Bäckman, Louise and Pentikäinen, Juha, 'Sami Religion', in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2005), vol. 12, pp. 8086–9

Balsys, Rimantas, *Lietuvių ir prūsų dievai, deivės, dvasios: nuo apeigos iki prietaro* (Vilnius: Metai, 2006)

Baronas, Darius, 'Christians in Late Pagan, and Pagans in Early Christian Lithuania: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 19 (2014): 51–81

Baronas, Darius and Rowell, S. C., *The Conversion of Lithuania: From Pagan Barbarians to Late Medieval Christians* (Vilnius: Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, 2015)

Begg, Ean C. M., *The Cult of the Black Virgin* (London: Arkana, 1996)

Bem, Kazimierz, *Calvinism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1548–1648: The Churches and the Faithful* (Leiden: Brill, 2020)

Bendix, Regina F. and Hasan-Rokem, Galit, 'Introduction: Concepts and Phenomena', in Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem (eds), *A Companion to Folklore* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 9–12

Berend, Nora, *At the Gate of Christendom: Jews, Muslims and 'Pagans' in Medieval Hungary, c. 1000–c. 1301* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Beresnevičius, Gintaras, 'Rickoyotto šventykla: Simono Grunau aprašymas ir kultinis Šiaurės Europos kontekstas ankstyvaisiais Viduramžiais', *Naujasis Židinys-Aidai* 10 (1996): 621–9

Bergesen, Rognald Heiseldal, 'Dutch Images of Indigenous Sámi Religion: Jan Luyken's Illustrations of *Lapland*', *Acta Borealia* 32:2 (2015): 103–24

Bertell, Maths, 'Local Sámi Bear Ceremonialism in a Circum-Baltic Perspective', in Frog Maths Bertell and Kendra Willson (eds), *Contacts and Networks in the Baltic Sea Region: Austmarr*

as a Northern mare nostrum, ca. 500–1500 AD (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), pp. 235–61

Bět'áková, Marta Eva and Blažek, Václav (eds), *Lexicon of Baltic Mythology* (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2021)

Bojtár, Endre, *Foreward to the Past: A Cultural History of the Baltic People* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1999)

Brauer, Michael, 'Erfindung oder Entdeckung? Neue Zugänge zur Erforschung des Heidentums am Beispiel des Preußenlandes im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 38 (2011): 185–216

Broka-Lāce, Zenta, 'Is It Possible to Reconstruct a Prehistoric Religion? Latvian Archaeology versus the Believers', *Archaeological Dialogues* 28 (2021): 141–62

Bumblauskas, Mangirdas, 'Žemaitijos virsmo iš pagoniškos į krikščionišką visuomenę klausimu', in Elvyra Usačiovaitė (ed.), *Sakralieji baltų kultūros aspektai* (Vilnius: Lietuvos Kultūros Tyrimų Institutas, 2012), pp. 107–38

Burnett, Linda A., 'Translating Swedish Colonialism: Johannes Schefferus's *Lapponia* in Britain c. 1674–1800', *Scandinavian Studies* 91 (2019): 134–62

Cameron, Alan, *The Last Pagans of Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Cameron, Euan, *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion, 1250–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Campagne, Fabián Alejandro, *Strix hispánica: Demonología cristiana y cultura folklórica en la España moderna* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2009)

Carey, H. M., *Courting Disaster: Astrology at the English Court and University in the Later Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992)

Carver, Martin (ed.), *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006)

Cervantes, Fernando, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in New Spain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994)

Chatterjee, Paroma, *Between the Pagan Past and Christian Present in Byzantine Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021)

Christiansen, Eric, *The Northern Crusades*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1997)

Chuvin, Pierre (trans. B. A. Archer), *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990)

Clark, Stuart, 'Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft', *Past & Present* 87 (1980): 98–127

Classen, Albrecht (ed.), *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2002)

Clemente, Guido, 'Introduction', in Rita Lizzi Testa (ed.), *The Strange Death of Pagan Rome* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 13–29

Copenhaver, Brian, *Magic in Western Culture: From Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Coult, Geoffrey G., *Five Centuries of Religion. Volume 1: St Bernard, His Predecessors and Successors, 1000–1200 A.D.*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929)

Cruz, Jo Ann Hoeppner Moran, 'Popular Attitudes Toward Islam in Medieval Europe', in David R. Blanks and Michael Frasetto (eds), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 55–82

Davies, Owen, *Paganism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Davies, Surekha, *Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

Davis, Philip G., *Goddess Unmasked* (Dallas, TX: Spence, 1998)

Delumeau, Jean (trans. Jeremy Moiser), *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: A New View of the Counter-Reformation* (London: Burns and Oates, 1977)

Devyatkina, Tatyana, *Mordvinian Mythology* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2004)

Dini, P. U., *Prelude to Baltic Linguistics: Earliest Theories about the Baltic Languages (16th Century)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014)

Douglas, Mary, 'Sorcery Accusations Unleashed: The Lele Revisited, 1987', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 69 (1999): 177–93

Douglas, Robin and Young, Francis, *Paganism Persisting: A History of European Paganisms since Antiquity* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2024)

Dowden, Ken, *European Paganism: The Realities of Cult from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 2000)

Dundulienė, Pranė, *Pagonybė Lietuvoje: Moteriškosios Dievybės*, 2nd ed. (Vilnius: Mokslo ir Enciklopedijų Leidybos Centras, 2021)

Enges, Pasi, 'Supernatural Beings and Christian Faith in a Sámi River Village', in Ülo Valk (ed.), *Studies in Folklore and Popular Religion: Volume 3* (Tartu: University of Tartu, 1999), pp. 221–34

Eriksonas, Linas, *National Heroes and National Identities: Scotland, Norway and Lithuania* (Brussels: P.I.E.-Peter Lang, 2004)

Fernández Olmos, Margarite and Paravisini-Gebert, Lizabeth, *Creole Religions of the Caribbean: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2022)

Filotas, Bernadette, *Pagans Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2005)

Flores, Larisa Pérez, 'Islas, migración y criollización: Canarias desde un enfoque descolonial', *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos* 65 (2019): 1–19

Fonnesberg-Schmidt, Iben, *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades 1147–1254* (Leiden: Brill, 2007)

Frasetto, Michael, 'The Image of the Saracen as Heretic in the Sermons of Ademar of Chabannes', in David R. Blanks and Michael Frasetto (eds), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 83–96

Freeman, Gerard Pieter, 'Francis of Assisi and the Sultan: Deviance and Normalization', *Religion and Theology* 23 (2016): 57–75

Frost, Robert, *The Oxford History of Poland-Lithuania: The Making of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, 1385–1569* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Gajda, Agnieszka, 'Romanticism and the Rise of Neo-Paganism in Nineteenth-Century Central and Eastern Europe', in Kaarina Aitamurto and Scott Simpson (eds), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (Durham: Acumen, 2013), pp. 44–61

Gaskill, Malcolm, *Between Two Worlds: How the English became Americans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Gaspar, Antonio Tejera and Vallejo, Eduardo Aznar, 'El primer contacto entre europeos y canarios: 1312?–1477' in Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria (eds), *VIII Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana* (1988) (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria: Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, 1991), vol. 1, pp. 17–38

Gimževskienė, Karolina, 'Raganos ir burtininkai lietuvių mitologinėse sakmėse ir jų atitikmenys rusų ir anglų kalbose', *Vertimo Studijos* 11 (2018): 15–30

Ginsburg, Carlo (trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi), *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, revised ed. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013)

Ginsburg, Carlo and Lincoln, Bruce, *Old Thiess, a Livonian Werewolf: A Classic Case in Comparative Perspective* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2020)

Glukhova, Natalya, 'Reflections of the Cheremis Religious Beliefs in the Texts of the Pagan Prayers', in Mare Kõiva and Kai Vassiljeva (eds), *Folk Belief Today* (Tartu: Estonian Academy of Sciences, 1995), pp. 60–6

Goto, Masanori, 'Metamorphosis of Gods: A Historical Study on the Traditional Religion of the Chuvash', *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 24 (2007): 144–65

Gouguenheim, Syvain, *Les derniers païens: les Baltes face aux chrétiens XIIIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Passés Composés, 2022)

Graff, Tomasz, 'Servants of the Devil or Protectors of Christianity and Apostles among Pagans? Shaping the Image of Poland and Poles in the Context of Steps Taken by Władysław II Jagiełło's Diplomacy against *Satira* by John Falkenberg', *Folia Historica Cracoviensia* 1 (2017): 143–76

Green, Tamara M., *The City of the Moon God: Religious Traditions of Harran* (Leiden: Brill, 1992)

Greimas, Algirdas, *Of Gods and Men: Studies in Lithuanian Mythology* (Bloomington, IA: Indiana University Press, 1992)

Haeussler, Ralph and Webster, Elizabeth, 'Creolage: A Bottom-Up Approach to Cultural Change in Roman Times', *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 3:1 (2020): 1–22

Hämeen-Anttila, Jaakko, *The Last Pagans of Iraq: Ibn Wahshiyya and His Nabatean Agriculture* (Leiden: Brill, 2006)

Harvey, Graham, *Listening People, Speaking Earth* (London: Hurst, 1997)

Harvey, Graham, *Animism: Respecting the Living World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006)

Harvey, Graham and Hardman, Charlotte (eds), *Paganism Today* (London: Thorsons, 1995)

Harvilahti, Lauri, 'Mythic Logic and Meta-discursive Practices in the Scandinavian and Baltic Regions', in Frog Maths Bertell and Kendra Willson (eds), *Contacts and Networks in the Baltic Sea Region: Austmarr as a Northern mare nostrum, ca. 500–1500 AD* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), pp. 187–210

Hastrup, Kirsten, 'Iceland: Sorcerers and Paganism', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 383–401

Hawkes, Jane, 'Anglo-Saxon Romanitas: The Transmission and Use of Early Christian Art in Anglo-Saxon England', in Peregrin Horden (ed.), *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages* (Donnington: Paul Watkins Publishing, 2007), pp. 19–36

Heide, Eldar, 'Spinning *seiðr*', in Anders Andrénn, Kristina Jennbert and Catharina Raudvere (eds), *Old Norse Religion in Long-Term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2006), pp. 164–70

Holland, Tom, *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 2019)

Honko, Lauri, and Pentikäinen, Juha, 'Finno-Ugric Religions: An Overview', in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2005), vol. 5, pp. 3105–110

Horák, Pavel, 'The Image of Paganism in the Age of Reason: From Idolatry towards a Secular Concept of Polytheism', *The Pomegranate* 18:2 (2016): 125–49

Hunt, Ailsa, 'Pagan Animism: A Modern Myth for a Green Age' in Ailsa Hunt and Hilary Marlow (eds), *Ecology and Theology in the Ancient World: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), pp. 137–52

Hunt, Lynn, Jacob, Margaret C. and Mijnhardt, Wijnland, *The Book that Changed Europe: Picart and Bernard's Religious Ceremonies of the World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010)

Hutton, Ronald, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Hutton, Ronald, *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007)

Hutton, Ronald, 'How Pagan Were Medieval English Peasants?', *Folklore* 122 (2011): 235–49

Hutton, Ronald, *Pagan Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013)

Hutton, Ronald, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, revised ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019)

Hutton, Ronald, *Queens of the Wild: Pagan Goddesses in Christian Europe: An Investigation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022)

Insoll, Timothy, 'Introduction', in Timothy Insoll (ed.), *Archaeology and World Religion* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1–32

Insoll, Timothy, *Archaeology, Ritual, Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004)

Jaskiewicz, W. C., 'A Study in Lithuanian Mythology: Jan Łasicki's Samogitian Gods', *Studi Baltici* 1:9 (1952): 65–106

Johanson, Kristiina and Jonuks, Tõnno, 'Are We Afraid of Magic? Magical Artefacts in Estonian Museums', *Material Religion* 14:2 (2018): 199–217

Jones, Prudence and Pennick, Nigel, *A History of Pagan Europe* (London: Routledge, 1995)

Jonuks, Tõnno and Äikäs, Tiina, 'Contemporary Deposits at Sacred Places: Reflections on Contemporary Paganism in Estonia and Finland', *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 75 (2019): 7–46

Joy, Francis and Armstrand, Peter, 'The Beliefs and Practices of Peter Armstrand, Sámi Drum Maker and Healer and the Expressions of Sámi Religion in a Contemporary Setting', *Shaman* 31:1–2 (2023): 61–88

Jurgelėnaitė, Rasa, 'Vilnius University as the Centre of the Study and Creation of Latin Literature in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania', in Outi Merisalo and Raija Sarasti-Wilenius (eds), *Mare Balticum, Mare Nostrum: Latin in the Countries of the Baltic Sea (1500–1800)* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1994), 139–49

Kahk, Juhan, 'Estonia II: The Crusade against Idolatry', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 273–84

Kaikkonen, Konsta, 'Sámi indigenous(?) Religion(s)(?) – Some Observations and Suggestions Concerning Term Use', in Trude A. Fonneland and Tiina Äikäs (eds), *Sámi Religion: Religious Identities, Practices and Dynamics* (Basel: MDPI, 2020), pp. 9–22

Kaikkonen, Konsta, 'Jacob Fellman's Introduction to Saami Indigenous Religion: A Source Critical Dilemma', in Håkan Rydving and Konsta Kaikkonen (eds), *Religions Around the Arctic: Source Criticism and Comparisons* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2022), pp. 161–203

Kala, Tiina, 'The Incorporation of the Northern Baltic Lands into the Western Christian World', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 3–20

Kala, Tiina, 'Rural Society and Religious Innovation: Acceptance and Rejection of Catholicism among the Native Inhabitants of Medieval Livonia', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *The Clash of Cultures at the Medieval Baltic Frontier* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 169–90

Kaljundi, Linda, 'Pagans into Peasants: Ethnic and Social Boundaries in Early Modern Livonia', in Linda Kaljundi and Tuomas Lehtonen (eds), *Re-Forming Texts, Music, and Church Art in the Early Modern North* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 357–92

Kamuntavičienė, Vaida, 'The Religious Faiths of Ruthenians and Old Lithuanians in the 17th Century according to the Records of the Catholic Church Visitations of the Vilnius Diocese', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 46:2 (2015): 157–70

Kent, Neil, *The Sámi Peoples of the North: A Social and Cultural History* (London: Hurst, 2014)

Khanmohamadi, Shirin A., *In Light of Another's Word: European Ethnography in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014)

Khodarkovsky, Michael, '"Not by Word Alone": Missionary Policies and Religious Conversion in Early Modern Russia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38:2 (1996): 267–93

Khodarkovsky, Michael, 'The Conversion of Non-Christians in Early Modern Russia', in Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (eds), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 115–43

Kieckhefer, Richard, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997)

Kiran, Albina, 'The Language and Culture of the Siberian Chuvash as an Object of Research', *Этническая культура* 4:1 (2022): 19–25

Kivimäe, Jüri, '*Servi Beatae Marie Virginis*: Christians and Pagans in Henry's *Chronicle of Livonia*', in Kirsi Salonen and Sari Katajala-Peltomaa (eds), *Church and Belief in the Middle Ages: Popes, Saints, and Crusaders* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 201–26

Klein, Andreas, *Early Modern Knowledge about the Sámi: A History of Johannes Schefferus' Lapponia (1673)* (Hanover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2023)

Klimka, Libertas, 'Senosios baltų mitologijos ir religijos', *Lituanistica*, 58:1 (2012): 89–95

Kling, David W., *A History of Christian Conversion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020)

Knoll, Paul W., *'A Pearl of Powerful Learning': The University of Cracow in the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016)

Knorre, Boris, 'Neopaganism in the Mari El Republic' in Kaarina Aitamurto and Scott Simpson (eds), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 249–65

Kõivupuu, Marju, 'Tradition in Landscape, Landscape in Tradition: Discourse of Natural Sanctuaries in Estonia', *Time and Mind* 13:3 (2020): 267–81

Konakov, Nikolai, 'Komi Religion', in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2005), vol. 8, pp. 5216–19

Kraft, Siv Ellen, 'Sámi Neo-Shamanism in Norway: Colonial Grounds, Ethnic Revival and Pagan Pathways', in Kathryn Rountree (ed.), *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Europe: Colonialist and Nationalist Impulses* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), pp. 25–42

Krollmann, Christian, *Das Religionswesen der alten Preußen* (Königsberg: Altpreußische Forschungen, 1927)

Kukk, Kristi, 'Stubborn Histories: Overcoming Pagan Brutality Narrative in Estonian 19th-Century National-Romantic Historiography in the Nordic and Baltic Context', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 38:2 (2013): 135–53

Kurisoo, Tuuli and Jonuks, Tõnno, 'To Be or Not to Be … a Christian: Some New Perspectives on Understanding the

Christianisation of Estonia', *Folklore: Electronic Journal of Folklore* 55 (2013): 69–98

Leete, Art and Koosa, Piret, 'Spiritual Power, Witchcraft and Protestants: Conflicting Approaches to Religious Belonging and Practice in the Komi Countryside', *Numen* 69 (2022): 517–41

Lind, John H., 'Consequences of the Crusades in Target Areas: The Case of Karelia', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 133–50

Lindkvist, Thomas, 'Crusades and Crusading Ideology in the Political History of Sweden, 1140–1500', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 119–30

Lindskog, Annika, 'Constructing and Classifying "The North": Linnaeus and Lapland', in Cian Duffy (ed.), *Romantic Norths: Anglo-Nordic Exchanges, 1770–1842* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 75–100

Lubamersky, Lynn, 'National Self-Perception among the Lithuanian Nobility: Evidence from the Radziwiłł Family', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 32:1 (2001): 5–18

Lübke, Christian, 'The Polabian Alternative: Paganism between Christian Kingdoms', in Przemysław Urbańczyk (ed.)., *Europe Around the Year 1000* (Warsaw: DiG, 2001), pp. 379–89

Luehrmann, Sonja, 'The Magic of Others: Mari Witchcraft Reputations and Interethnic Relations in the Volga Region', *Russian History* 40 (2013): 469–87

Mackey, Jacob L., *Belief and Cult: Rethinking Roman Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2022)

Madar, Maia, 'Estonia I: Werewolves and Poisoners', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 257–72

Magasich-Airola, Jorge and Beer, Jean-Marc de (trans. Monica Sandor), *America Magica: When Renaissance Europe Thought it had Conquered Paradise* (London: Anthem Press, 2006)

Makarov, Nikolaj, 'Far Northern Parts of Ancient Russia on their Way to Christianity', in Michael Müller-Wille (ed.), *Rom und Byzanz im Norden: Mission und Glaubenswechsel im Ostseeraum während des 8.–14. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), pp. 259–73

Mand, Anu, *Urban Carnival: Festive Culture in the Hanseatic Cities of the Eastern Baltic, 1350–1550* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005)

Marenbon, John, *Pagans and Philosophers: The Problem of Paganism from Augustine to Leibniz* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015)

Marenbon, John, 'Relativism in the Long Middle Ages: Crossing the Ethical Border with Paganism', *Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5.2 (2015): 345–65

Mathisen, S. R., 'Hegemonic Representations of Sámi Culture: From Narratives of Noble Savages to Discourse on Ecological Sámi', in A-L Siikala, B. Klein and S. R. Mathisen (eds), *Creating Diversities: Folklore, Religion and the Politics of Heritage* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2004), pp. 17–30

Matuzova, Vera I., 'Mental Frontiers: Prussians as Seen by Peter von Dusburg', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 252–9

Mažeika, Rasa, 'When Crusader and Pagan Agree: Conversion as a Point of Honour in the Baptism of King Mindaugas of Lithuania (c. 1240–63)', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 197–214

McLean, Matthew, *The Cosmographia of Sebastian Münster: Describing the World in the Reformation* (London: Routledge, 2007)

Meserve, Margaret. *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008)

Metsvahi, Merili, 'Description of the Peasants' Sexual Behavior in August Wilhelm Hupel's Topographical Messages in the Context of the History of the Estonian Family', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 47:3 (2016): 301–23

Mezezers, Valdis, *The Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic and Its Outreach into America and Elsewhere in the World* (North Quicy, MA: Christoper, 1975)

Mikanowski, Jacob, *Goodbye Eastern Europe: An Intimate History of a Divided Land* (London: Oneworld, 2023)

Milis, Ludo J. R. (trans. Tanis Guest), *The Pagan Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998)

Minenko, Nina Adamovna and Zubkov, Konstantin Ivanovich (eds), *На стыке континентов и судеб: этнокультурные связи народов Урала в памятниках фольклора и исторических документах* (Yekaterinburg: Russian Academy of Sciences (Ural Branch), 1996), 2 vols

Misāne, Agita, 'Inter-War Right-Wing Movements in the Baltic States and their Religious Affiliations', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 46:1–2 (2001): 75–87

Monter, E. William, 'Scandinavian Witchcraft in Anglo-American Perspective', in Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (eds), *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 425–34

Mulsow, Martin, 'Antiquarianism and Idolatry: The Historia of Religions in the Seventeenth Century', in Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi (eds), *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), pp. 181–209

Murray, Alan V. (ed.), *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001)

Murray, Margaret A., *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921)

Nastevics, Ugis, 'Latvian Religion – Dievturība?', *Religiski-Filozofiski Raksti* 24 (2018): 82–104

Naum, Magdalena, 'Between Utopia and Dystopia: Colonial Ambivalence and Early Modern Perception of Sápmi', *Itinerario* 40:3 (2016): 489–521

Nazarova, Evgeniya L., 'The Crusades against Votians and Izhorians in the Thirteenth Century', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 177–96

Niedźwiedź, Jakub, 'How Did Vergil Help Forge Lithuanian Identity in the Sixteenth Century?', in Giovanna Siedina (ed.), *Latinitas in the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Its Impact on the Development of Identities* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2014), pp. 35–48

Nielsen, Torben K., 'The Missionary Man: Archbishop Anders Sunesen and the Baltic Crusade, 1206–21', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier, 1150–1500* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 95–117

Nielsen, Torben K., 'Sterile Monsters? Russians and the Orthodox Church in the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 227–52

Noreen, Kirstin, 'The High Altar of Santa Maria in Aracoeli: Recontextualizing a Medieval Icon in Post-Tridentine Rome', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 53 (2008): 99–128

Nyberg, Tore, *Monasticism in North-Western Europe, 800–1200* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2000)

O'Donnell, James J., '*Paganus*', *Classical Folia* 31 (1977): 163–9

Olesen, Jens E., 'The Swedish Expeditions ('Crusades') Towards Finland Reconsidered', in Kirsi Salonen and Sari Katajala-Peltomaa (eds), *Church and Belief in the Middle Ages: Popes, Saints, and Crusaders* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 251–67

Ortiz García, Carmen, 'Islas de ida y vuelta: Canarias y El Caribe en contexto colonial', *Disparidades: Revista de Antropología* 59:2 (2004): 195–220

Ostling, Michael, *Between the Devil and the Host: Imagining Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Ostling, Michael, 'Introduction: Where've All the Good People Gone?', in Michael Ostling (ed.), *Fairies, Demons, and Nature Spirits: 'Small Gods' at the Margins of Christendom* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 1–53

Ozoliņš, Gatis, 'The Dievturi Movement in Latvia as Invention of Tradition', in Kaarina Aitamurto and Scott Simpson (eds),

Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe (Durham: Acumen, 2013), pp. 94–111

Ozzano, Luca and Giorgi, Alberta, 'World Religions', in Laura Horn, Ayşem Mert and Franziska Müller (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Global Politics in the 22nd Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), pp. 309–23

Pagden, Anthony, *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982)

Palmer, James T., 'Defining Paganism in the Carolingian World', *Early Medieval Europe* 15 (2007): 402–25

Paulson, Ivar (trans. Juta Kõvamees Kitching and H. Kõvamees), *The Old Estonian Folk Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1971)

Pentikäinen, Juha (ed.), *Shamanism and Northern Ecology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996)

Pentikäinen, Juha, 'Mari and Mordvin Religion', in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2005), vol. 8, pp. 5708–11

Pereswetoff-Morath, Alexander I., '"Otiosorum hominum receptacula": Orthodox Religious Houses in Ingria, 1615–52', *Scando-Slavica* 49:1 (2003): 105–29

Petts, David, *Pagan and Christian: Religious Change in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2011)

Pikli, Natália, *Shakespeare's Hobby-Horse and Early Modern Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2022)

Pilaszek, Malgorzata, 'Litewskie procesy czarownic w XVI XVIII w', *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 46 (2002): 7–35

Plaat, Jaanus, 'Religious Movements and Congregations in West Estonia from the mid-18th to the Beginning of the Twentieth Century: Their Influence on the Estonian and Estonian-Swedish Popular Culture', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 46:1–2 (2001): 161–74

Pluskowski, Alexander and Valk, Heiki, 'Conquest and Europeanisation: The Archaeology of the Crusades in Livonia, Prussia and Lithuania', in Adrian J. Boas (ed.), *The Crusader World* (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 568–92

Pócs, Éva, 'The Hungarian *Táltos* and the Shamanism of Pagan Hungarians: Questions and Hypotheses', *Acta Ethographica Hungarica* 63:1 (2018): 149–96

Põldvee, Aivar, 'Agricola's List (1551) and the Formation of the Estonian Pantheon', in Linda Kaljundi and Tuomas Lehtonen (eds), *Re-Forming Texts, Music, and Church Art in the Early Modern North* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), pp. 449–74

Pranskevičiūtė, Rasa, 'Contemporary Paganism Practices in Lithuanian Context: Principal Beliefs and Practices of Romuva', in Kaarina Aitamurto and Scott Simpson (eds), *Modern Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Central and Eastern Europe* (Durham: Acumen, 2013), pp. 77–93

Pronk, Tijmen, 'Balto-Slavic', in Thomas Olander (ed.), *The Indo-European Language Family: A Phylogenetic Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 269–92

Prusinowska, Justyna, 'They are Still Coming Back. Heroes for Time of Crisis: Vidvuds and Lāčplēsis' in Ieva Kalniņa (ed.), *Literatūra un Reliģija: Svētie un Grēcinieki* (Riga: Latvijas Universitātes Akadēmiskais Apgāds, 2018), pp. 66–84

Rasmussen, Siv, 'The Protracted Sámi Reformation – or the Protracted Christianising Process', in Lars Ivar Hansen, Rognald Heiseldal Bergesen and Ingebjørg Hage (eds), *The Protracted Reformation in Northern Norway: Introductory Studies* (Stamsund: Orkana Akademisk, 2016), pp. 165–83

Rasmussen, Siv, 'Post-Reformation Religious Practices among the Sámi', in Sigrun Høgetveit Berg, Rognald Heiseldal Bergesen and Roald Ernst Kristiansen (eds), *The Protracted Reformation in the North: Volume III from the Project 'The Protracted Reformation in Northern Norway'* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 265–85

Rembold, Ingrid, *Conquest and Christianization: Saxony and the Carolingian World, 772–888* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

Reynolds, Burnham W., *The Prehistory of the Crusades: Missionary War and the Baltic Crusades* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)

Robbins, Joel, 'Crypto-Religion and the Study of Cultural Mixtures: Anthropology, Value, and the Nature of Syncretism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79:2 (2011): 408–24

Robson, Michael, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006)

Róna-Tas, András, 'Chuvash Religion', in Lindsay Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2005), vol. 3, pp. 1784–6

Rountree, Kathryn (ed.), *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Europe: Colonialist and Nationalist Impulses* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015)

Rowell, S. C., *Lithuania Ascending: A Pagan Empire within East-Central Europe, 1295–1345* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

Rowell, S. C., 'The Face beneath the Snow: the Baltic Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *The Historical Journal* 44:2 (2001): 541–88

Rowell, S. C., 'Was Fifteenth-Century Lithuanian Catholicism as Lukewarm as Sixteenth-Century Reformers and Later Commentators Would Have Us Believe?', *Central Europe* 8:2 (2010): 86–106

Ruben, Aarne, 'Witchcraft in and Around Pärnu 1641–42', *Preternature* 8:1 (2019): 35–89

Rubiés, Joan Pau, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Russell, Frederick, 'Paulus Vladimiri's Attack on the Just War: A Case Study in Legal Polemics', in Brian Tierney and Peter Linehan (eds), *Authority and Power: Studies on Medieval Law and Government Presented to Walter Ullmann* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 237–54

Rwykin, Michael, 'An Odd Entity: The Case of the Kaliningrad Exclave', *American Foreign Policy Interests* 25:3 (2003): 209–16

Ryan, William F., 'The Witchcraft Hysteria in Early Modern Europe: Was Russia an Exception?', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 76:1 (1988): 49–84

Ryan, William F., *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Witchcraft and Magic in Russia* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999)

Rydving, Håkon, *The End of Drum-Time: Religious Change among the Lule Saami, 1670s–1740s* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1993)

Salih, Sarah, *Imagining the Pagan in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2019)

Salmi, Anna-Kaisa, Äikäs, Tiina, Spangen, Marte, Fjellström, Markus and Mulk, Inga-Maria, 'Tradition and Transformation in Sámi Animal-Offering Practices', *Antiquity* 92:362 (2018): 472–89

Seymour, M. C., *Bartholomaeus Anglicus and His Encyclopedia* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992)

Shumkin, Vladimir, 'The Wizards of Lapland and Saami Shamanism', in Juha Pentikäinen (ed.), *Shamanism and Northern Ecology* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996), pp. 125–33

Silvén, Eva, 'Contested Sami Heritage: Drums and Sieidis on the Move', in Dominique Poulot, José María Lanzarote Guiral and Felicity Bodenstein (eds), *National Museums and the Negotiation of Difficult Pasts: Conference Proceedings from EuNaMus; European National Museums: Identity Politics; the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen; Brussels 26–27 January 2012* (Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2012), pp. 173–86

Sjoholm, Barbara, *From Lapland to Sápmi: Collecting and Returning Sámi Craft and Culture* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2023)

Smetonienė, Anželika, 'The Textual Influences of Jacob Ledesma's Catechism and the Catechism of Mikalojus Daukša on the Anonymous Catechism of 1605', *Kalbotyra* 68 (2016): 68–179

Soormally, Mina Garcia, *Idolatry and the Construction of the Spanish Empire* (Denver, CO: University Press of Colorado, 2018)

Spangen, Marte and Äikäs, Tiina, 'Sacred Nature: Diverging Use and Understanding of Old Sámi Offering Sites in Alta,

Northern Norway', in Trude A. Fonneland and Tiina Äikäs (eds), *Sámi Religion: Religious Identities, Practices and Dynamics* (Basel: MDPI, 2020), pp. 121–42

Staliūnas, Darius, *Making Russians: Meaning and Practice of Russification in Lithuania and Belarus after 1863* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007)

Stankevičienė, Regimanta, 'The Image of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the Child of Šiluva Basilica: The Problems of the Origin, Iconographic Context and Dating', *Meno Istorija ir Kritika* 5 (2009): 19–36

Stasulane, Anita, 'The *Dievturi* Movement in the Reports of the Latvian Political Police (1939–1940)', *The Pomegranate* 14:1 (2012): 31–46

Stasulane, Anita and Ozoliņš, Gatis, 'Transformations of Neopaganism in Latvia: From Survival to Revival', *Open Theology* 3 (2017): 235–48

Stock, Paul, 'The Idea of Asia in British Geographical Thought, 1652–1832', *Transactions of the Royal History Society* (Seventh Series) 1 (2023): 121–44

Storm, Dikka, 'The Church, the Pietist Mission and the Sámi: An Account of Northern Norwegian Mission District in the Early Eighteenth Century', *Norsk Tidsskrift for Misjonsvitenskap* 3 (2017): 59–75

Stoyanov, Yuri, *The Other God: Dualist Religions from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000)

Stoyle, Mark, *The Black Legend of Prince Rupert's Dog: Witchcraft and Propaganda during the English Civil War* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011)

Strmiska, Michael (ed.), *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005)

Strmiska, Michael F., 'Romuva Looks East: Indian Inspiration in Lithuanian Paganism', in Milda Ališauskienė and Ingo W. Schröder (eds), *Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Society: Ethnographies of Catholic Hegemony and the New Pluralism in Lithuania* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 125–50

Strmiska, Michael P., 'Pagan Politics in the 21st Century: "Peace and Love" or "Blood and Soil"?', *The Pomegranate* 20:1 (2018): 5–44

Sutrop, Urmas, 'A Wooden God of the Estonians from before 1800?', *TRAMES* 3 (2004): 339–44

Taagepera, Rein, *The Finno-Ugric Republics and the Russian State* (London: Hurst, 1999)

Tamm, Marek, 'History as Cultural Memory: Mnemohistory and the Construction of the Estonian Nation', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 39:4 (2008): 499–516

Tamm, Marek, 'A New World into Old Words: The Eastern Baltic Region and the Cultural Geography of Medieval Europe', in Alan V. Murray (ed.), *The Clash of Cultures on the Medieval Baltic Frontier* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 11–36

Tamminen, Miika, 'The Axe of Lalli and the Cap of St Henry – a View from Finland', in Felix Hinz and Johannes Meyer-Hamme (eds), *Controversial Histories – Current Views of the Crusades: Engaging the Crusades*, Volume 3 (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 91–3

Testa, Rita Lizzi (ed.), *The Strange Death of Pagan Rome* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013)

Testa, Rita Lizzi, 'When the Romans became *pagani*', in Rita Lizzi Testa (ed.), *The Strange Death of Pagan Rome* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 31–51

Toivo, Raisa Maria, *Faith and Magic in Early Modern Finland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

Tolan, John V., 'Muslims as Pagan Idolaters in Chronicles of the First Crusade', in David R. Blanks and Michael Frasetto (eds), *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 97–118

Tolley, Clive, *Shamanism in Norse Myth and Magic* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2009)

Trinkūnas, Jonas (ed.), *Of Gods and Holidays: The Baltic Heritage* (Vilnius: Tvermė, 1999)

Tumėnas, Vytautas, 'Kernavės "Perkūno" semantikos vietinis ir tarpkultūrinis kontekstas', *Sovijus* 10:1 (2022): 23–43

Urban, William L., *The Teutonic Knights: A Military History* (London: Greenhill, 2003)

Urbanavičienė, Saulė, 'Survivals of Paganism in 14th–17th-Century Graves in Lithuania', in Michael Müller-Wille (ed.), *Rom und Byzanz im Norden: Mission und Glaubenswechsel im Ostseeraum während des 8.–14. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), pp. 131–42

Urtãns, Juris, 'Cylindrical Ritualistic Stones with a Cup Mark in Latvia', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 23:1 (1992): 47–56

Vaitkevičius, Vykintas, *Studies into the Balts' Sacred Places* (London: British Archaeological Reports, 2004)

Vaitkevičius, Vykintas, 'The Main Features of the State Religion in Thirteenth-century Lithuania', *Balto-Slavic Studies* 16 (2004): 331–56

Vaitkevičius, Vykintas, 'Rambyno šventvietės griūtis', *Būdas* 2:209 (2023): 11–23

Valk, Heiki, 'Christianization and Changes in Faith in the Burial Traditions of Estonia in the 11th–17th Centuries AD', in Michael Müller-Wille (ed.), *Rom und Byzanz im Norden: Mission und Glaubenswechsel im Ostseeraum während des 8.–14. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998), pp. 36–55

Valk, Heiki, 'Christianisation in Estonia: A Process of Dual-Faith and Syncretism', in Martin Carver (ed.), *The Cross Goes North: Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300–1300* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006), pp. 571–9

Valk, Ülo, 'Tallima Paap as a Popular Prophet of the Eighteenth Century: Looking Beyond his Teachings', in Jürgen Beyer, Albrecht Burkardt, Fred van Lieburg and Marc Wingens (eds), *Confessional Sanctity (c. 1550–c. 1800)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht Verlage, 2003), pp. 357–71

Van Engen, John H., 'The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem', *American Historical Review* 91:3 (1986): 519–52

Vandenbroeck, Paul, 'Capturing Nameless Energies, Experiencing Matrixial Paradoxes: Syncretist Sacred Sites on the Canary Islands' in T. Coomans, H. De Dijn, J. De Maeyer, R. Heynickx and B. Verschaffel (eds), *Loci Sacri: Understanding Sacred Places* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), pp. 93–122

Västrik, Ergo-Hart, 'In Search of Genuine Religion: The Contemporary Estonian *Maausulised* Movement and Nationalist Discourse', in Kathryn Rountree (ed.), *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Europe: Colonialist and Nationalist Impulses* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), pp. 130–53

Viiding, Kristi, 'Livonian, Lithuanian and Polish Jesuits in the Speeches and Correspondence of the Livonian Humanist David Hilchen', in Grzegorz Kosłowski and Anti Selart (eds), *100 Years of Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Estonia: Common Traces in a Difficult History* (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2020), pp. 91–9

Vine, Angus, *In Defiance of Time: Antiquarian Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Walsham, Alexandra, 'Migrations of the Holy: Explaining Religious Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44:2 (2014): 241–80

Ward, W. R., *Christianity under the Ancien Régime, 1648–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Watson, Christine, *Tradition and Translation: Maciej Stryjkowski's Polish Chronicle in Seventeenth-Century Russian Manuscripts* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsalensis, 2012)

Watts, Edward, *The Final Pagan Generation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2020)

Webster, Jane, 'A Dirty Window on the Iron Age? Recent Developments in the Archaeology of pre-Roman Celtic Religion', in Katja Ritari and Alexandra Bergholm (eds),

Understanding Celtic Religion: Revisiting the Pagan Past (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), pp. 121–54

Werth, Paul W., 'Armed Defiance and Political Appropriation: Assimilation and the Transformation of Mordvin Resistance, 1740–1810', *Nationalities Papers* 27:2 (1999): 247–70

Werth, Paul W., 'Big Candles and "Internal Conversion": The Mari Animist Reformation and Its Russian Appropriations', in Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky (eds), *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 144–72

Wheeler, Graham John, 'Discourses of Paganism in the British and Irish Press during the Early Pagan Revival', *The Pomegranate* 19 (2017): 5–24

Wilby, Emma, *Cunning-Folk and Familiar Spirits: Shamanistic Visionary Traditions in Early Modern British Witchcraft and Magic* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), pp. 14–17

William, George Huntston, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Penn State University Press, 1995)

Williams, Elise, 'Lithuanian Awakening: How a Book Ban Rebirthed a National Identity', *The History Teacher* 55:1 (2021): 137–52

Williams, Kelsey Jackson, 'Antiquarianism: A Reinterpretation', *Erudition and the Republic of Letters* 2 (2017): 56–96

Williams, Liz, *Miracles of Our Own Making: A History of Paganism* (London: Reaktion, 2021)

Williams, Mark, *Ireland's Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016)

Willumsen, Liv Helene, 'The Witchcraft Trial against Anders Poulsen, Vadsø 1692: Critical Perspectives', in Håkan Rydving and Konsta Kaikkonen (eds), *Religions Around the Arctic: Source Criticism and Comparisons* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2022), pp. 139–60

Young, Francis, *English Catholics and the Supernatural, 1553–1829* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013)

Young, Francis, *A History of Exorcism in Catholic Christianity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

Young, Francis, *Magic as a Political Crime in Medieval and Early Modern England: A History of Sorcery and Treason* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017)

Young, Francis, '"Of Divels in Sarmatia Honored": Writing Baltic Paganism in Early Modern England', *The Pomegranate* 24:1 (2022): 70–95

Young, Francis, *Twilight of the Godlings: The Shadowy History of Britain's Supernatural Beings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023)

Young, Francis, 'Mendicant Missionary Journeys in Medieval and Early Modern Lithuania', in Małgorzata Krasnodębska-D'Aughton and Annejulie Lafaye (eds), *Mendicants on the Margins* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2024), pp. 129–44

Zaroff, Roman, 'Some Aspects of Pre-Christian Baltic Religion', in Patrice Lajoye (ed.), *New Researches on the Religion and Mythology of the Pagan Slavs* (Lisieux: Lingva, 2019), pp. 183–219

Zinkevičius, Zigmas, 'Польско-ятвяжский словарик?', in Vyacheslav V. Ivanov (ed.), *Балто-славянские исследования 1983* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), pp. 3–29

Zinkevičius, Zigmas (trans. Ramutė Pliopys), *The History of the Lithuanian Language* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir Enciklopedijų Leidybos Institutas, 1998)

Zujienė, Gitana, 'Witchcraft Court Cases in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 20 (2015): 79–125

Unpublished PhD Theses

Bumblauskas, Mangirdas, 'Samogitia's Christianisation and the Paganism Factor (15th–16th c.)', unpublished PhD thesis, Vilnius University, 2014

Web Sources

Higgins, Charlotte, 'Three centuries on, a shaman's precious rune drum returns home', *The Guardian*, 13 March 2022, theguardian.com/science/2022/mar/13/three-centuries-on-a-shamans-precious-rune-drum-returns-home

limis.lt

BNS, 'Neo-Pagans Not Granted State Recognition in Lithuania', LRT English, 19 September 2023, lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2080646/neo-pagans-not-granted-state-recognition-in-lithuania

'Protocol No. 3 on the Sami People', 29 August 1994, static1.squarespace.com/static/5dfb35a66f00d54ab0729b75/t/5e7a2c6aa2bf8526c3fa9bb6/1585065067737/Protocol_3_EU95_original.pdf

Stratton, Mark, 'The people with the reddest hair in the world', BBC News, 11 November 2014, bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-29950844

INDEX

absolutism, 222
Acerbi, Giuseppe, 284–5, 288, 291–2, 294–6, 365
Aesculapius (Greek deity), 145–6, 204
Afonso IV, king of Portugal, 150
African traditional religions, 25, 278
Agricola, Mikael, 180–1
agriculture, 43, 62, 100
  slash-and-burn, 321
Agrippa, Wenceslaus, 203
Aiguzina, Nastia, 20
aitvaras (Lithuanian spirit), 200, 255, 267, 306
Albert, archbishop of Riga, 102
Albert I, duke of Prussia, 166, 190–2, 250
Alekseev, Kuz'ma, 350–1
Alexander I, tsar, 301
Alexander III, Pope, 73
Alexander III, tsar, 354
Alexander IV, Pope, 97
Alexander Jagiellon, king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania, 197
Alkas (festival), 306
All Saints' Day, 21, 268, 306
All Souls' Day, 180, 225, 268
Alta, Norway, 229
Altysh (Mari leader), 216
Ambundi, Johannes, bishop of Riga, 125
amulets, 206
ancestor worship, 101, 105, 107, 110–11, 129, 208, 237, 264, 268
Andogonov, Iuri, 356
Andrew, St, 252
Andrew II, king of Hungary, 72
Anglo-Saxons, 23, 31, 66
animatism, 99
animism, 3, 14–15, 17, 38, 46, 57–8, 62–3, 65, 99, 104–6, 109, 111, 149–50, 154–5, 158, 165, 173–4, 214–15, 217–19, 237–8, 253, 279, 283–4, 308, 320–4, 327, 372–4
  definition of, 18–22
  revivals of, 350–7, 369, 380–1
Anna Jagiellon, grand duchess of Lithuania, 212
Anne, St, 231
Anthony, St, 123, 298
anthropology, 3, 57, 85, 164, 227, 278, 284, 286, 348
anti-Catholicism, 42, 287–8
antiquarianism, 3, 38, 43–4, 60, 220, 222–3, 225–8, 230, 232–3, 251, 255–6, 262, 275–6, 280, 300, 342, 344, 363, 367, 369
Apolonus (legendary founder), 203
apostasy, 11, 69–70, 76, 112, 124, 157, 179, 182, 198–9, 274, 356
Aquaviva, Claudio, 200, 213

https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009586559.013

Aracoeli, Santa Maria in, Rome, 156
archaeology, 24–7, 38, 41, 55, 57–8, 90, 123–4, 144, 160, 178, 190, 206, 316, 360, 362
Arctic Circle, 60
Arctic Ocean, 103
Argenti, Giovanni, 274
Arianism, 65
Arjeplog, Sweden, 232
Armenia, 85
Ascension Day, 245
assimilation, cultural, 28, 31, 65, 100, 121, 149, 158–9, 214, 256, 288, 325
Assumption, feast of the, 245, 270, 289
Asyka, prince of the Mansi, 148
Athens, Greece, 156
Attila the Hun, 203
Augustine, St, 56
Augustus, emperor, 156
Austro-Hungarian Empire, 331
autochthony, 16–17

Baardsen, Guivi, 229
Bacchantes, 94
bagpipes, 191, 301
Bali, Indonesia, 69
Baltic Germans, 16, 98, 222, 242, 297, 304, 326, 335, 341, 359
Balts. *See* Curonians; Galindians; Latgalians; Latvians; Lithuanians; Nadruvians; Prussians ('Old Prussians'); Selonians; Semigallians; Skalvians; Yotvingians
Bång, Petrus, bishop of Vyborg, 225
baptism, 2, 11, 34, 51, 66, 78–81, 112, 115, 121, 134, 138, 140, 147, 158, 161, 173, 178, 182, 190, 197, 204, 230–1, 258, 263, 266, 273, 277, 294, 306, 321–2, 324, 326–7, 350, 352
  forced, 69, 282, 320, 322–3, 325–6, 330, 356
  washing away of, 121, 129
Bardaitas (Baltic deity), 206, 209
Barons, Krišjānis, 338–41
Bartholomaeus Anglicus, 65, 84–9, 172
Bashkorts, 217
bears, 91, 93, 201, 206, 249, 292
Beaukuris (Baltic deity), 265
beer, 128, 184–5, 188–9, 250, 252, 259, 305–6
Bekker, Balthasar, 283
Belarus, 1, 79, 195, 313, 341
Belaya, river, 104
Berbers, 150
Bernard, Jean Frédéric, 286
Bernard of Clairvaux, 71
Bernardines, 318
Berno, bishop of Schwerin, 69
berserkers, 93
Besermians, 111
Béthencourt, Jean de, 153–4
Betygala, Lithuania, 311
Białowieża Forest, 313–14
Bible, the, 12, 55, 63, 117–18, 158, 166, 183, 238, 284
Birger Jarl, 95
Birgersson, Valdemar, 97
birkarlar, 120
Biruta (Baltic deity), 304
Biržulis (Baltic deity), 254
Black Sea, 1
Blake, William, 334
Blandanus, St, 157
blessed objects, 258, 262, 270
Blizgulis (Baltic deity), 318
blood libels, 351
Blount, Charles, 287

Bluķķu (Latvian deity), 307
Boldush, prince of Malmyzh, 216
Bolgars, 106
book ban, Lithuanian, 343
Bosnia, 70–1
botany, 291, 294
Botero, Giovanni, 169
Bothnia, Gulf of, 90, 173, 295
Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, 154
Boxa, Paulus, 188
Boxner, Caspar, 193
Brandenburg, Germany, 250
Brastiņš, Ernest, 344
Brēķina (Latvian deity), 187
Brigantia (British deity), 27
Britain, 4, 24, 27, 39, 47, 67, 80, 162, 259, 317, 361
Brīvzemnieks, Fricis, 338
Brodowski, Jakub, 317–18
Brook, Adam, 200
Brotze, Johann Christoph, 300
Bruno of Querfurt, 102
Brzostowski, Konstanty Kazimierz, bishop of Vilnius, 311
Buddhism, 345–6, 372
Buonaccorsi, Filippo, 144–6
burials, furnished, 23, 87, 125, 144, 252
burning, penalty of, 164, 182, 229, 232, 249, 273, 312, 323
Bychowiec Chronicle, 202–3

Calvinism, 166, 196, 201, 207–8, 212, 262, 266
Canary Islands, 8, 56, 116, 118, 149–60, 168, 288–9
Candelaria, Virgin of, 154, 156–7, 269, 289
cannibalism, 165
canon law, 11, 132, 274
Caribbean, the, 25, 28, 56, 154, 278
Cartari, Vincenzo, 227
Carthaginians, 150
Casimir IV, grand duke of Lithuania/king of Poland, 140
Castor and Pollux (Roman deities), 206
catechesis, 11, 50, 167, 220
catechisms, 44, 200–1, 345, 351
Catherine II, empress of Russia, 326
Catholicism, 1–2, 62, 65, 70, 83, 85, 96, 112, 124, 141–3, 151, 155, 160, 164, 166–8, 180–1, 188, 191–2, 194, 196–7, 200–1, 208, 213, 219, 222, 247, 251, 257, 263, 266, 268, 274, 282, 285–7, 296–7, 302, 309, 311–12, 318–21, 326–8, 335–6, 343
  Counter-Reformation. *See* Counter-Reformation
  popular, 41, 120, 122–3, 155, 173, 182, 243–6, 298, 319
Caucasus Mountains, 59
Caupo (Livish chieftain), 98
cemeteries, 125, 128–9, 144, 247, 322
central Asia, 77, 348, 350
Cerda, Luis de la, 'Prince of Fortuna', 150–1
ceremonia Guanche, 289
Cerroklis (Baltic deity), 259
Cēsis, Latvia, 188
Chalym, Russia, 216
Chancelour, Richard, 163
chantry chapels, 296
Charlemagne, emperor, 66–7, 330
Charnauchycy, Belarus, 313
Chauriri (Baltic deity), 206
Cherdyn, Russia, 104, 106, 147

Cheremis Wars (1553–84), 215–17
China, 85, 88
Chipaz (Mordvin deity), 279
cholera, 363
Christian IV, king of Denmark–Norway, 177
Christianesque, the, 24–5, 27, 52, 71, 135, 161, 180, 189, 220, 230, 276, 367–8, 373
Christianisation, 6, 8, 13, 16, 18, 21, 23, 26–8, 30–6, 40, 42–3, 48, 50, 53, 62, 64–5, 78, 81, 89, 96, 102–3, 112, 116, 121–2, 140, 142–4, 147, 150, 158, 162, 166, 168, 171–3, 177, 183, 211, 214–15, 220, 236, 243, 247, 258, 263, 271, 307, 313, 324, 329, 331, 340, 349, 361, 373
  'deep', 8, 42
  failure of, 59, 65–73
  forced, 322, 324
  internal, 140
Christianus de Oliva, bishop of Prussia, 84
Christmas, 184, 235, 260, 265, 268, 307, 313, 316–17, 354
Christmas men (Sámi spirits), 231, 373
Chumblat (Mari king), 352
Church Fathers, 55, 227, 287
Chuvashes, 3, 65, 107–9, 112, 161, 214, 219, 321, 323–5
Cimbrians, 119
classicism, 102, 117, 203, 227
Clement V, Pope, 61
Clement VI, Pope, 151
coins, 91, 120, 123, 188, 190–1, 267, 291, 304, 325, 360, 362
colonisation, 4, 8, 16, 25, 27, 31, 63, 67, 147–8, 150, 158, 169–70, 186, 196, 202, 218, 222, 289–90, 331, 335, 351, 371, 376
  cultural, 142
  of the past, 154
Columbus, Christopher, 56, 118
comparative religion, 286
Congo, Democratic Republic of the, 278
Conrad, duke of Mazovia, 73
Constance, Council of, 130, 169
Constantine, emperor, 65, 115
Constantinople, fall of (1453), 115, 118
conversion events, 29–32, 34, 42–3, 116, 121, 134, 136, 141–3, 349
Copenhagen, Denmark, 294
Counter-Reformation, 39, 167, 169, 201, 212–13, 219–20, 262, 329
Courland and Semigallia, Duchy of, 82, 181, 184–5, 190–1, 256–7, 261, 274, 302, 339–41
cremation, 2, 71, 81, 83, 101, 124–5, 204
creolisation, religious, 25–7, 29, 44, 123, 143, 220, 224, 227, 230, 244, 268, 274, 298, 319, 328, 347, 349, 354, 356, 363–4, 367–8, 370, 372, 376
cross, sign of the, 213, 244, 267–8
Crusades, 11, 57, 88, 112, 117, 133, 151–2
  Baltic, 33, 72–3, 102, 133
  Finnish, 95–6
  Izhorian, 214
  Karelian, 96–7
  Northern, 38, 73–83, 114, 131, 133
  Second, 71
  Wendish, 71–2

crypto-religion, 22, 26
Culesius, Petrus, 187–9
Cumans, 72–3
Čuorvut movement, 293
Curche (Baltic deity), 253–4
Curonian language, 100
Curonians, 98
Cyril and Methodius, 104

dainas, 308, 338–41
Dantyszek, Jan, bishop of Warmia, 169
Danube, river, 86
Daugavpils, Latvia, 257, 302, 304–6, 317
Daukantas, Simonas, 335–6, 345
Daukša, Mikalojus, 201
Daumantas, elder of Samogitia, 140
De la Gardie, Magnus Gabriel, 233–4
Decjusz, Justus Ludwik, 197
deism, 287–8
Dēkla (Latvian deity), 308
Delphi, Oracle of, 94
Deluge, the, 263
demonisation, 41, 210, 220, 224, 249, 260, 325, 335, 368
demons, 56, 77, 94, 128, 157, 168, 176, 189, 201, 224, 227, 237, 267–8, 283–4, 287, 316
Denmark, 73, 88, 124, 170, 177
Denmark–Norway. *See* Norway
Devinį Ūšinę/Usins (Latvian deity), 259, 304
diabolism, 224, 361
Dierpmis (Sámi deity), 231
Dievas (Baltic deity), 49–50, 139
Dievturi religion, 345, 377
Dimstipatis (Baltic deity), 207, 264
divination, 92, 101, 136, 138, 146, 171, 176, 192, 194, 208, 211, 239–40, 271
Długosz, Jan, 134–6, 145, 202
Dnieper, river, 67, 99
Dołęga-Chodakowski, Zorian (Adam Czarnocki), 334
domestic spirits. *See* household spirits
Don, river, 86
Doria, Joan, 151
dragons, 174
druids, 4, 334
drums, Sámi, 24, 172–3, 176, 229–32, 238–41, 291, 294, 377
Drusti, Latvia, 304
druzhinniki, 109
dual-faith observance, 20, 199
dualism, 71, 279
Dubysa, river, 133
Durbe, battle of (1260), 82

earth, cult of. *See* Žemyna (Baltic deity)
Easter, 189–90, 264, 268, 313, 317, 354
Edward VI, king of England, 164
Einhorn, Paul, 186, 225, 260–2, 308, 338–40
Elbe, river, 72
elder trees, 192
Elizabeth, empress of Russia, 301
England, 31–2, 47, 163–5, 264, 296, 340
Enlightenment, the, 3, 6, 57, 60, 281–5, 287–8, 290, 326–7, 329
Enontekiö, Finland, 295
Epidaurus, Greece, 204
Epiphany, 265, 313, 317
Epiphany the Wise, 105
Erik IX, king of Sweden, 95

Erzians, 106, 218, 322–3, 350–1
Espinosa, Alonso de, 156–8
Estonia, Duchy of, 184, 242
Estonia, Republic of, 73, 345, 378, 380
Estonians, 3, 16–17, 23, 36, 47, 62–5, 71, 73, 75–6, 78, 83, 86–8, 97–9, 102, 112, 124–6, 160, 179, 181–4, 186, 190, 210, 242–50, 258, 273, 276–7, 279, 282, 290–1, 296–301, 304, 309, 327, 331, 335, 337, 341, 343, 359–62, 364–5, 367, 371–2
ethnography, 3, 6, 43–5, 50–1, 53–4, 59–60, 89, 97, 109, 112, 116–19, 136, 145, 165, 168, 171–2, 174, 187, 206, 220, 222, 226–8, 232, 254, 256, 275, 280, 285, 291, 297, 332, 338, 348, 355, 358, 363, 367, 369
Eugenius III, Pope, 71–2
evil eye, 272
Evstafii Plakida, St, 178
excommunication, 11, 311
exorcism, 262, 265, 268, 305, 329, 360
eyes, healing of, 362

fairies, 35, 52, 264, 344, 361
Falkenberg, John, 132–3
familiars, 176, 241
Faunus (Roman deity), 27
feasting, ritual, 101, 129, 213, 264, 268, 314, 351–2, 361
Ferdinand and Isabella, Catholic monarchs, 56, 153
fertility, 46–7, 51, 111, 250, 300, 360–1, 372
festive culture, 252, 316
Finland, 90–1, 95–6, 151, 166, 170, 172, 178–9, 181, 190, 225, 247, 273, 295, 331, 336, 371, 374
Finland, Gulf of, 95, 97
Finno-Ugric peoples. *See* Erzians; Estonians; Finns; Karelians; Komi people; Izhorians; Mari people; Mokshans; Mordvins; Nenets people; Sámi people; Udmurt people; Vepsians; Votians
Finns, 65, 85, 93, 95–6, 120, 177, 180–1
fires, perpetual, 1–2, 101, 107, 134–6, 138, 171, 201, 204, 206, 245, 255, 314
Flanders, 70
folk culture, 39–40, 42, 46, 277, 301, 333, 338
folklore, 3, 5, 46–51, 55, 107, 124, 185–6, 198, 237, 249, 272, 278, 320, 336–8, 344, 347, 357–9, 364–5
Fontenelle, Bernard de, 287
forests, sacred, 1–2, 19–20, 81, 99–100, 128–9, 134–5, 137, 199, 210, 248, 250, 253, 259, 298, 320, 355, 372
found religion, 368, 372, 381
France, 70, 162, 168, 226
Francis of Assisi, 84
Franciscans, 1, 84–5, 151, 172, 281, 318
Franks, 66
fraternities, 147, 360–1
Frisians, 66
Funck, Johannes, 190
funeral rites, 124–5, 189, 194, 205, 252
furs, 105, 111, 165

Gailiuvienė, Kotryna, 210
Galindians, 100

gandr, 92
Gdańsk, Gulf of, 100
Gediminas, grand duke of Lithuania, 203, 205
Gelvonai, Lithuania, 270–1, 315
gentiles, 141, 157–8, 174, 262, 274
geographers, 59, 84, 287
George, St, 186
Georgi, Johann Gottlieb, 323
Germany, 47, 70, 86, 90, 144, 331, 344
gentiles, 157
giants, 53, 157, 174, 337, 357
Giedroyć, Melchior, bishop of Samogitia, 213
Giltinė (Baltic deity), 318
Gisevius, Eduard, 343–4
goats, 1, 188, 193–4, 221, 260, 263
Golden Horde, 106, 108–9, 149
Gomel, Belarus, 341
Goštautas, Albertas, 202–3
Gottschalk, prince of the Obodrites, 70
Gran Canaria, Canary Islands, 153
granaries, 194, 263–4, 267, 360
grave goods, 125, 144, 360
Great Northern War, 250, 297
Great Perm, principality of, 102–6, 147–8, 217
Greek Catholics, 271
Greifenspeer, Colonel, 243
griffins, 86
groves, sacred, 46, 134, 137, 145, 178, 182, 198, 201, 204–5, 243, 258, 260, 264, 267, 298, 302–3, 305, 322–3, 352, 359
Grunau, Simon, 192–3, 252–3
Grunwald, battle of (1410), 114–15, 130, 138, 145
Guadalupe, Our Lady of, 155
Guagnini, Alessandro, 207
Guanches, 8, 56, 60, 118, 149–59, 288–9
guising, 317
Gustav Vasa, king of Sweden, 170
Gutslaff, Johann, 248
Gutsleff, Eberhard, 300–1

Haakon IV Haakonsson, king of Norway, 61
Hadrian VI, Pope, 170
Hagemeister, Heinrich von, 304
Hansen, Gotthard, 300
Hartknoch, Christoph, 251–2
Hazelius, Artur, 363
Heberstein, Sigismund, 217
Helmold of Bosau, 69
Henning, Salomon, 123, 186
Henry, bishop of Finland, 96, 336
Henry of Livonia, 124, 129, 365
Herbert, Edward, Lord Cherbury, 287
herbs, 270
Herder, Johann Gottfried, 334
heresy, 11–12, 71, 132, 161, 182, 188, 212–13, 266, 270
Hermann of Wartberge, 75–6
Herodotus, 54, 117
Hesiod, 207
hiis sites, 99, 123–4, 178–80, 243, 248, 291, 297, 299, 359
Hinduism, 346, 356
Holy Land, the, 73, 133
Holy Spirit, the, 111
honey, 218
host, consecrated, 246, 268, 279, 373
household spirits, 194, 197, 204, 208, 267, 318, 360
humanists, Renaissance, 6, 60, 116, 119, 136, 144–5, 169, 171, 192–3, 204–5, 207, 238, 241, 376

Hume, David, 288
Hungary, 32, 72, 144, 347
hunter-gatherers, 62, 64, 119, 170
Hupel, August Wilhelm, 297–300, 303, 306, 308
Hussovianus, Nicolaus, 198
Hyacinth, St, 198
Hyperboreans, 92, 174

Iakmanov, Andrei, 353–5, 357
iasak (tribute), 218
Iceland, 52–3, 67, 283
idolatry, 11–13, 52, 56, 70, 76, 79, 105, 119, 132, 140–1, 164–5, 167–8, 171, 188, 191, 197, 199–200, 208–9, 211–12, 226–7, 229, 239, 242–3, 249, 252, 257, 261–2, 269, 282, 284, 286, 288, 292–3, 295–6, 298, 300, 302, 304, 306, 311, 313, 319
  death penalty for, 294
Ignatius of Loyola, St, 315, 329
Ilgės (festival), 21, 267
Ilja (missionary to the Karelians), 178–9
Ilya (Elijah), St, 180
indigenous peoples, 8, 16–17, 53, 103, 116, 150–1, 153–6, 169, 236, 321
indults, 147
Inflanty Voivodeship, 257, 302
Ingria, Russia, 214
inhumation, 124
Inmar (Udmurt deity), 111
Innocent III, Pope, 71, 125
Innocent IV, Pope, 81, 88–9
internal conversion, 69, 354
interpretatio Christiana, 55–6
interpretatio Nordica, 283
interpretatio Romana, 13, 54–5, 174, 206, 283, 317
Ireland, 4, 31–2, 35, 39, 47, 66–7, 80, 162, 247, 364
Ishaki, Russia, 325
Isidore of Seville, 86
Iskorsk, Russia, 147
Islam, 1–2, 11–13, 17, 19, 62, 69, 71, 106, 108–9, 115, 141, 150, 152, 159, 165, 215, 219, 289, 324–5, 354, 356, 371
Italy, 46, 168, 203, 264, 331, 364
ius gentium, 130, 169
Ivan III, grand prince of Muscovy, 147
Ivan IV ('the Terrible'), tsar of Muscovy, 165, 177, 215, 218
Iwullis (Baltic deity), 253
Izhorians, 3, 65, 97, 214

Jagaubis (Baltic deity), 317
Jagiellonian dynasty, 115, 143, 166, 169, 195, 199
Jama, Russia, 214
James III, king of Majorca, 150
James VI, king of Scots, 177
Jan, Haiki, 248
Jankus, Martynas, 344
January Uprising (1863), 343
Japan, 168
Jersika, Latvia, 102
Jerusalem, 71–2
Jews, 266
Jogaila (Władysław II Jagiełło), king of Poland/grand duke of Lithuania, 1–3, 115, 127, 130–5, 137, 139, 143, 145, 199
Johannes, bishop of Ösel-Wiek, 123, 182
John of Piano Carpini, 85, 88
John of the Lithuanian Dukes, bishop of Vilnius, 198
John the Baptist, St, 244

John-Jerome of Prague, 135–9, 144
Johnson, Richard, 163–5
Jokkmokk, Sweden, 237
Joniškis, Lithuania, 199
Judaism, 1, 11, 141–2, 159, 171, 270, 289, 351, 371
Juhlii (Sámi spirits), 235
Jumo (Mari deity), 354
Jung, Michael, bishop of Samland, 128–9
Jungingen, Ulrich von, 114
Juno (Roman deity), 198
Jupiter (Roman deity), 144, 206
Jūratė and Kastytis (myth), 337
Jürgen, Vihtla, 248
Justinian, emperor, 157

Kalev (giant), 337
Kalkus, Estonia, 245, 279
Kalmyks, 372
Kaltinėniai, Lithuania, 211
Kama, river, 104, 110
Kandalaksha Bay, Russia, 177
Kanep, Estonia, 248
Karaites, 138
Karelians, 3, 62, 64–5, 95, 97, 121, 147, 178–81
Karksi, Estonia, 360
Karp, Józef Michał, bishop of Samogitia, 312–13
karts (Mari priests), 352
Kaukai (Baltic spirits), 200, 201, 208
Kaunas, Lithuania, 133
Kautokeino, Norway, 293
Kava Yumo (Mari deity), 110
Kazan, Khanate of, 149, 165, 215, 218–19
Kazan, Russia, 216, 322–3, 354
Kekri (Finnic deity), 180, 225
Kelch, Christian, 250, 308
Kernavė, Lithuania, 144
Kęstutis, grand duke of Lithuania, 144
Kettler, Gotthard, duke of Courland and Semigallia, 190
Kettler family, 256
Kexholm (Priozersk), Russia, 179
Khanty people, 60, 214, 320
Khrap, Stepan (Stepan of Perm), 104–6, 147–8
Kildal, Jens, 294
Kildishin (Udmurt deity), 111
Kinde Shochyn Yumo (Mari deity), 110
Kiose-Olma (Sámi deity), 178
kiremet', 108–9, 325
Klaipėda, Lithuania, 195, 252, 344
Knutsson, Torgils, 96
Kokshaisk, Russia, 216
Koksharov, Russia, 109
Kola, river, 178
Kola Peninsula, Russia, 30, 90, 170, 177–8
Kolsky, Feodorit, 178
Komi people, 3, 18, 64–5, 103–6, 147–8
Königsberg, Prussia (Kaliningrad, Russia), 191, 193–4, 196, 200, 207, 251–2
Korolenko, Vladimir, 352
Kostroma, Russia, 110
Kozmodiemansk, Russia, 216
Krainski, Krzysztof, 208
Kraków, Poland, 130, 142
Kresze (Baltic deity), 128
Kreutzwald, Friedrich Reinhold, 337
Krive (Baltic priest), 77
Kromer, Martin, 202
Kudlubowska, Catharina Alexandrowa, 270
Kugu sorta (Mari religious movement), 353–7

Kugu Yumo (Mari deity). *See* Jumo (Mari deity)
kugyzha (Mari spirits), 110
Kujvas, Russia, 214
Kurbskii, Andrei, 217
Kurna, Estonia, 249
Kwazh (Udmurt deity), 111
Kweck, Theophilus, 305
Kyivan Rus', 102, 161
Kyvel, Johannes, bishop of Saare-Lääne, 182

La Palma, Canary Islands, 153
Läänemaa, Estonia, 361
Lääne-Nigula, Estonia, 250
Lāčplēsis (hero), 337
Ladoga, Lake, 95
Laestadius, Lars Levi, 357–8
Laimė (Baltic deity), 254
Lalli (murderer), 336
Lancashire, England, 246
Lancre, Pierre de, 168
language barriers, 32, 63, 219
lares. *See* household spirits
Las Casas, Bartolomé de, 169
Łasicki, Jan, 187, 207–9, 254, 272
Laskowski, Jan, 211
Łaszkowski, Jakub, 207, 209–10, 213
Latgalians, 98, 100, 102, 188, 190, 258
Latin America, 25, 79
Latin language, 54, 66, 83, 194, 203, 237, 242
Latvia, 47, 73, 86, 93, 98, 100, 102, 181, 185, 265, 301, 328, 331, 335, 337–41, 343–5, 362, 371, 377–8
Latvian language, 100
Latvians, 3, 26, 36, 62–3, 65, 78, 93, 101, 112, 160, 179, 184, 187–91, 210, 225, 256–62, 277, 282, 302–10, 349, 363–4, 373
Laukasargis (Baltic deity), 200
laukinės (Lithuanian spirits), 267
laumės (Lithuanian spirits), 344
Ledesma, Jacob, 201
Leem, Knud, 292
legacy religion, 296, 328, 363, 375
Lelo Deves (Latvian deity), 188
Lembitu (Estonian leader), 98
Leo X, Pope, 172
lexicography, 44, 308, 317
libations, 264
linden (lime) trees, 199, 259, 304–6, 360
linguistics, 19, 25, 49, 346
Linnaeus, Carl, 291
literacy, 7, 166
Lithuania, Grand Duchy of, 41, 47, 79–83, 86–9, 100, 102, 114, 126–7, 129–30, 132, 135, 141–7, 160–2, 166, 170, 194–214, 220, 224–5, 257, 259, 262–75, 277, 297, 306, 310–20, 329, 375
  conversion of (1387), 3, 31, 64, 115, 134, 168, 367
Lithuania, Republic of, 221, 256, 329, 344–5, 362, 378
Lithuania Minor, 128, 166, 195–6, 221, 252, 256, 275, 343–4
Lithuanian language, 2, 100, 128–9, 196, 200, 202, 205, 310, 343
Lithuanians, 21, 36, 38, 62–3, 65, 78–9, 100–2, 113–15, 129–30, 135, 139, 141–7, 158, 169, 179, 184–5, 195–211, 222, 226, 252, 255, 262–6, 269, 271–2, 275, 277, 282, 310–12, 326, 328, 335–7, 340–5, 364, 367, 372

Lituanus, Michalo, 204–5
Livonia, 73, 77–8, 80, 84, 86–8, 98, 123–6, 139, 160, 162, 181–91, 220, 223, 249, 259, 271, 275, 277, 302, 312, 321
  Duchy of, 184
  Swedish, 242–3, 256
Livonian Brothers of the Sword, 73, 80, 99
Livonian War, 123, 183–4, 217
Livs, 93, 98, 102, 124, 160, 185–6, 194, 208, 304
Lizdeika (Lithuanian priest), 203, 205
Lødingen, Norway, 293
Lublin, Union of (1569), 195
luck, 105, 231, 237, 328, 363
Lucretius, 206
Ludza, Latvia, 257
Łuków, Poland, 84
Luotemenyt (Sámi deity), 178
Lutheranism, 20, 30, 41, 122, 166, 172–3, 177, 180, 183–4, 188, 190–3, 196, 206, 213, 221, 225, 232, 234, 236, 243, 245–6, 250–1, 257, 260–1, 292, 294, 297, 300–3, 307–10, 326, 328, 343, 357
Luticians, 68–70
Lyck, Prussia (Ełk, Poland), 193

maa-alused (Estonian spirits), 298
Maausulised (Estonian native faith movement), 380
Maciej z Miechowa, 203
Maciejowski, Samuel, bishop of Kraków, 199
Maclonus, St, 157
Maddarakka (Sámi deity), 231
Magdeburg, Germany, 84
Magdeburg Letter, 70–1, 76
magic, 10, 52–3, 56–7, 92–5, 99, 128, 138, 140, 146, 171–2, 174–6, 179, 187, 192, 201, 211, 213, 229, 234–5, 239–40, 249, 256, 270–2, 310–11, 328, 348, 362, 373
  Christianity as, 246, 258
Magyars. *See* Hungary
Magyla (Baltic deity), 318
Majas kungs (Latvian deity), 306
Malalas, John, 83
Malecki, Hieronim, 193–4, 208–9, 263
Malecki, Jan, 193, 209, 263
Mamich Berdei (Mari prince), 216
Mandeville, John, 77
Mannhardt, Wilhelm, 341
Mansi people, 60, 148, 214, 320
Margarita (early Sámi convert), 120
Margarita I, queen of Norway, 120
Margrethe II, queen of Denmark, 377
Mari El, 323, 355–7
Mari El Republic, Russia, 69, 109, 216–18, 377
Mari people, 3, 20, 36, 57, 62, 64–5, 107, 109–12, 214–18, 283, 321, 323–5, 352–7, 369, 372, 377
Marienau, Jan, bishop of Culm, 127
Markopollus (Baltic deity), 26
Marovskis-Bregžis, Kārlis, 344
marriage, 34, 126, 171, 251, 301, 306, 325, 377
  regularisation of, 263
Mars (Roman deity), 206
Martin V, Pope, 139
Martt, Pyrsa, 248
Mary, Virgin, 24, 46, 122, 154–6, 230–1, 247, 254, 273, 310, 364, 373
  apparitions of, 270–1, 315

Mary I, queen of England, 164–5
Masurians, 254
material culture, 45, 222, 226, 240
Maximus of Turin, 264
Mažvydas, Martynas, 200
Medeina (Baltic deity), 201
Medininkai (Varniai), Lithuania, 140
Melek al-Kamil, sultan, 85
Melno, Treaty of (1422), 127, 129, 135
Merino, Esteban Gabriel, patriarch of the West Indies, 169
Mesha, river, 216
meteorites, 136
Metirkviečiai, Lithuania, 221
métisisation, 25
Metsik (Estonian deity), 250
Mexico, 155
Michaelmas, 265, 306
Midsummer. *See* St John's Night
Mikhail, duke of Great Perm, 147–8
Milan, Edict of (313), 65
Milda (Lithuanian deity), 336
Mindaugas, king of Lithuania, 80–3, 89
missionaries, 20, 28, 32–3, 39, 41, 43–4, 47, 49, 51, 53, 62–3, 74, 78, 85, 97, 102, 104–6, 112, 115, 120, 122, 127, 135–40, 144, 147–8, 158–60, 166–7, 173, 177–9, 189–90, 197–8, 200–1, 206–7, 209–10, 212–13, 218–20, 223, 225–6, 228, 235, 240, 257, 259, 261, 264–6, 269–70, 273–5, 277, 279–80, 293–6, 302–3, 305, 308, 312, 314–15, 317–21, 323, 351–2, 354, 356–8, 367, 369–70
Modava (Mordvin deity), 107
Mokshans, 106, 218, 351
Mongols, 79, 86, 88–9, 106, 118
monotheism, 2, 11, 24, 238, 285, 287–8, 354–5, 365, 375
  Noahic, 157
Montviliškis, Lithuania, 316
Moravian Brethren, 301, 309, 328
Mordvins, 3, 64–5, 106–7, 110–11, 214–15, 218, 279, 321–5, 351–2, 364
Moreau de Maupertuis, Pierre Louis, 291
Morris dancing, 4, 47
Moscow, Russia, 106, 110, 147, 170, 215, 218, 323, 338, 343
Mothers, Divine, 26, 101, 187, 260, 363–4, 373
Mulgimaa, Estonia, 360
Müller, Gerhard Friedrich, 323
Münster, Sebastian, 118
Murom, Russia, 110
Muromsky, Lazar, 121
Murray, Margaret, 4, 46
Muscovy, principality of, 106, 120, 147–9, 165, 176–8, 184, 204, 214–16, 269, 272
museums, 240, 363
Myandash (Sámi deity), 91
mythography, 227, 337
mythology, 53, 107, 189, 237, 289, 308, 310, 336–8, 340–1, 343, 347
  comparative, 49, 55

Nadbor, Andreas, 199–200
Nadruvians, 166, 252, 254–5
Narbutt, Teodor, 336–7
Narew, river, 314
Narva, river, 97
nationalism, 3–4, 9, 17, 28, 41, 330–1, 333–50, 353, 356, 365–6, 380

Native Americans, 25, 174
native faith movements, 14, 17, 332–4, 345, 365, 378–80
natural law, 132, 288
nature spirits, 54, 373
Nazis, 344
Nemunas, river, 133, 269, 343
Nenets people, 3, 62, 64, 103, 161, 163–5, 215, 324
neopaganism. *See* native faith movements
neophytes, 75, 78, 112–13, 124, 133, 160–1, 182, 321, 359
Neoplatonists, 355
neo-Shamanism, 348, 377
Neris, river, 2, 83
Nero, emperor, 202
Neuri, 184
Nevėžis, river, 134–5
New Mexico, 329
New World, 8, 53, 79, 118, 159, 168–70, 220, 329–30
Nicetas of Byzantium, 11
Nicholas, St, 279, 325
Nicholas I, tsar, 342
Nicolai, Anders, 172
Niezabitowski, Albin, 342
Nikolai Chudotvorec, St, 178
Nikulapaz (Mordvin deity), 279
Nilsson, Anders, 232
Nishkepaz (Mordvin deity), 279
Nizhni Novgorod, Russia, 109, 216, 322–3
noaididi (Sámi shamans), 15, 91–5, 175–6, 229, 232, 240–1, 291, 294, 348
nobility, pagan, 285
nomads, 22, 61–2, 72, 90, 119, 160, 170, 177
Nordlandene, Norway, 230
Normandy, 67
Norse religion, 67, 92–3, 283, 340
Norway, 30, 61, 73, 89, 91, 166, 170, 172, 230, 239, 377
Novaya Zemlya, Russia, 163
November Uprising (1830–31), 342
Novgorod, Republic of, 61, 96–7, 102–4, 106, 109, 111, 120–1, 147–9, 170, 179, 214
nursery rhymes, 4
Nyazvizh, Belarus, 265
Nybudžiai, Prussia (Nybudia Krasnogorskoye, Russia), 255
nympholepsy, 95
Nystad, Treaty of (1721), 297

oak trees, 100, 107, 139, 158, 199, 213, 221, 259, 302–6, 322
Obodrites, 70
Odin (Norse deity), 339
offering places. *See hiis* sites
Oka, river, 100
Okainiai, Lithuania, 315
Olaus Magnus, 174–7, 184–7, 228
Old (Julian) Calendarists, 317
Old Lithuanians. *See* Yotvingians
Old Multan, Russia, 351
Old Prussians. *See* Prussians ('Old Prussians')
Oleśnicki, Zbigniew, 145
Onega, Lake, 121
oracles, 192
Organic Statute, 342
Orthodoxy, 1–3, 41, 61–2, 80, 83, 85, 96–7, 103–6, 109, 112, 121, 141, 147–9, 160–1, 167, 169–70, 177–80, 196–7, 208–9, 212, 214–19, 266, 271, 297, 309, 319, 320–1, 324, 326–8, 343, 350–1, 354–6, 360, 369, 377
Oryol, Russia, 100
Ösel. *See* Saaremaa, Estonia

Osh Keche Yumo
(Mari deity), 110
Ottoman Empire, 118, 159, 321, 330–1
Outhier, Réginald, 291
owls, 253

Paap, Tallima, 301
Paežeriai, Lithuania, 362
pagan survivals, idea of, 3–5, 8, 42, 50–1
paganesque, the, 24, 52, 379
paganism, as problematic concept, 7, 9–18
pagirnės (Lithuanian spirits), 267
Pagirnis (Baltic deity), 264, 316
Palamuse, Estonia, 245
Palemon (mythical leader), 202
Pama (Komi shaman), 105
Panevėžys, Lithuania, 269
pan-Fennicism, 346
pan-Slavism, 346
pantheons, 13, 49, 54, 318, 334
Paris, France, 342
parishes, 34, 126–7, 140, 159, 211, 221, 243–4, 247, 263, 277, 296
Pärnu, Estonia, 248
Pašiausė, Lithuania, 269
Paszkiewicz, Jakub, 270
Paul, St, 43, 156
Paul the Deacon, 92
Pechenga, river, 178
Pechora, river, 324
Peipus, lake, 97
Peko (Estonian deity), 300, 360–2
Pell (Estonian deity), 360
Pergrubris (Prussian deity), 194
Perkūnas (Baltic deity), 1, 100–1, 144, 188, 200–1, 206, 221, 251, 255, 281
Persia, 85, 145
Peter of Duisburg, 77, 252
Petrarch, 144–5
Petri, Benedictus, 171
Petronius, 206
Peucer, Caspar, 176–7
philopaganism, 202, 220, 334, 336, 345
philosophia perennis, 285
Picart, Bernard, 286
Piena māte (Latvian deity), 187
Pietism, 292–4, 300–1, 309, 328, 357, 359
Pietkiewicz, Jerzy, bishop of Samogitia, 205
Pihkva, lake, 97
Pinnas, Latvia, 362
piracy, 98
Piteå, Sweden, 172
Pius II, Pope (Enea Silvio Piccolomini), 136, 144
Polabian Slavs, 67–8, 72
Poland, 114, 142, 196–7, 203, 247, 256, 262, 313, 316–17, 334, 336, 342
Poland–Lithuania (Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth from 1569), 39, 115, 130, 159, 161, 166, 169, 184, 195–6, 199, 203, 223, 242, 256, 262, 275, 281, 302, 309, 326, 329
  partitions of, 314, 319, 341
Polenz, Georg von, 206
Poliander (Johann Gramann), 193
Polish-language, 142, 195, 313
Polo, Marco, 26, 88
polonisation, 142, 195, 262, 319
polytheism, 12–13, 18, 23, 54, 158, 168, 180, 284–8, 380–1
Pomponius Mela, 184
Ponikiewski, Jakub, 211

popi (community leaders), 257–8, 265
Portugal, 150
Portunus (Roman deity), 206
Pososhkov, Ivan, 321
Potrympos (Baltic deity), 206, 251
Povelsen, Anders, 230–2, 377
Prätorius, Matthäus, 53, 222, 251–6, 271
priests, pagan. *See karts* (Mari priests); *popi* (community leaders); vaidilas (Lithuanian priests); *weideler* (Prussian priests)
Pripegala (Slavic deity), 70
Procopius, 92
Prose Edda, 340
proselytism. *See* missionaries
Prussia, 53, 73, 77–8, 82, 100–2, 126–9, 160, 162, 166, 184, 209–10, 221, 343
Prussian language, 100
Prussians ('Old Prussians'), 3, 60, 63, 65, 73, 78, 83–4, 100, 112, 126–9, 160, 166, 191–4, 208, 222, 250–6, 263
Prussians, German, 114, 195
Przewalski's Horse, 370
Publius Libo, 202
Pugachev Revolt (1773–75), 324
Pumpurs, Andrejs, 337
Pustozersk, Russia, 324
Pykullis (Baltic deity), 251, 255
Pymyshevaia Poliana, Russia, 218

Qur'an, 12

race, 177
Radien Atzhie (Sámi deity), 231, 296
Radien Kiedde (Sámi deity), 296
Radwan, Jan, 203
Radziwiłł, Jan, 203
Radziwiłł, Mikołaj ('the Red'), 203
Radziwiłł family, 166, 196, 201
Ragana (Baltic deity), 272
Rainis (Jānis Pliekšāns), 338
Rambynas, Lithuania, 343–4
Ramygala, Lithuania, 197
Råneå, Sweden, 237
Räpina, Estonia, 245
Rassy-aike (Sámi deity), 178
rationalism, 285, 327, 358
Rauna, Latvia, 307
Reconquista, Iberian, 131, 151–2
Redarians, 67
Reformation, 57, 122–3, 161, 166–7, 169, 172, 183, 191, 193, 201, 219–20, 224, 247, 282, 296, 364
reindeer-herding, 64, 90–2, 119, 160, 170, 178, 372
Reval. *See* Tallinn, Estonia
revivals, Christian, 246, 292–3, 297, 301, 309, 382
revivals, pagan, 4–5, 37, 40, 109–10, 258, 327, 332–4, 344–6, 350–5, 369, 377–80
Rēzekne, Latvia, 188, 257
Rheen, Samuel, 91, 237
rhetoric, 10–11, 16, 119, 143, 167, 227, 357
Riedegost (shrine), 68
Rietavas, Lithuania, 265
Riga, Gulf of, 98
Riga, Latvia, 80, 102, 188, 256–8, 260, 302
  cathedral, 260
Risti, Estonia, 298
rocks, sacred. *See* stones, sacred
Roman Empire, 2, 8, 32, 54, 58, 65–6, 146, 150, 206, 226
Romanisation, 27–8, 66
Romanitas, 66
Romanticism, 99, 330, 334–5
Rome, Italy, 166, 198, 204, 314

Romuva (Lithuanian native faith movement), 40, 378
Romuva (shrine), 77
Roth, Michael, 319
Rotundus, Augustinus, 203
Rovaniemi, Finland, 120
Royzius, Petrus, 205
Rudenės (festival), 267
Rugians, 69
Rugių Boba ('Mother of Rye') (Baltic deity), 210
Ruhig, Philipp, 317
Rumiantsev, Nikolai, 341–2
Rupert of the Rhine, 234
Rus', Kyivan, 67, 79–80, 89
Rusalii, 51
Russia. *See* Muscovy, principality of; Russian Empire; Russian Federation; Soviet Union (USSR)
Russian Empire, 4, 124, 223, 282, 296–7, 302, 309, 319, 321, 326, 329, 331, 341–2, 344, 350, 352
Russian Federation, 1, 9, 90, 104, 106, 109, 111, 256, 376
russification, 149, 320, 343, 353, 376
Russow, Balthasar, 191
Ruthenians, 89, 141, 161, 196–7, 317

Saaremaa, Estonia, 82, 98, 243, 245, 250, 300, 360–1
Sabinus, George, 193
sacrifices, 1, 18, 23, 34–5, 67, 77, 81, 87, 91, 99, 101, 105, 107, 111, 140, 146, 188, 193–4, 198, 210–11, 213, 221, 235, 237–9, 243–4, 248, 253–4, 259, 263, 279, 285, 292–4, 296, 298, 302–3, 306, 316, 328, 350–1, 370–1, 373
  animal, 12–13, 128, 180, 190, 352–3, 355
  human, 107, 351
  libations, 35, 128, 179, 188, 194, 198, 221, 254, 305–7, 316
  to churches, 122, 231, 245–7
  to trees, 258, 303
saints, 23–4, 35, 76, 122–3, 154–5, 178–80, 246, 298–9, 318, 354, 370, 373
  Muslim, 108
Salle, Gadifer de la, 152–3
Samaritans, 292
Sambia (Samland), Prussia, 126, 128
Sámi people, 3–4, 14–15, 17, 20, 24, 30, 36–8, 41, 61–2, 64–5, 85–6, 89–95, 112, 119–23, 147, 160, 166, 170–8, 185, 210, 214, 224, 226, 228–42, 276–7, 282–5, 288, 290–6, 310, 328, 348, 357–8, 365, 372–3, 376–7
  Skolt Sámi, 178
Samogitia, 32–3, 81, 115–16, 127, 129–41, 144, 159–60, 162, 170, 185, 187, 195, 197, 199, 264, 273–4
Samogitians, 8, 82, 89, 101, 129–41, 158, 188, 201, 205, 207–14, 254, 266–71, 283, 312–13, 342, 363
Sápmi, 47, 89–95, 118–23, 141, 160, 162, 170–8, 220, 223–4, 228–42, 247, 271, 275, 278, 284, 290–7, 300, 329, 348, 357, 363, 367, 377
  Finnmark, 122, 173, 229–30, 293, 363
  Kemi Lappmark, 120

Lule Lappmark, 120, 173
Pite Lappmark, 120, 173
Torne Lappmark, 120, 122, 172–3, 230
Troms, 293, 377
Sáráhkká (Sámi deity), 230–1
Sarmatians, 54, 119, 252
Saturn (Roman deity), 206
Šaukliai, Lithuania, 362
Saule, battle of (1236), 80
saunas, 129
Savonia, Finland, 225
Saxons, 66–7, 71, 125
Scandinavia. *See* Denmark; Finland; Iceland; Norway; Sápmi; Sweden
Schefferus, Johannes, 228, 232–42, 310
Schism, Papal, 130
Scotland, 46, 177
Scythians, 54, 86, 119, 270, 274
secret societies, 361
secularisation, 4, 34, 286–7, 336, 345, 366, 376, 381–2
seers, 189
Segarra, Jaume, 151
seiðr, 92–3
Selonians, 100
Sēlspils, Latvia, 307
Semigallians, 80, 87, 98
Serchthrift (ship), 163–5
Šešuoliai, Lithuania, 316
sexuality, 13, 51, 249, 299, 301, 317
shamanism, 14–15, 18, 52, 55, 58, 60, 92–5, 105–6, 108, 150, 164–5, 172, 175–6, 185–6, 224, 229–30, 240–1, 247, 293, 347–8, 374, 377
Shcherbatov, Mikhail, 326
Shkay (Mordvin deity), 107
Šiauliai, Lithuania, 269
Siberia, 15, 37, 355
Sidenius, Lennart, 293–4
Šidlauskas-Visuomis, Domas, 345–6
sieididi (Sámi sacred sites/objects), 91, 93, 120, 238, 241, 291, 300, 363, 377
Sigismund I ('the Old'), king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania, 199–200
Sigismund II August, king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania, 203
Sigurd the Crusader, king of Sweden, 67
Sikhism, 356
Siksali, Estonia, 125
Šiluva, Lithuania, 271
Sipa, Estonia, 360
Skalvians, 100
Skytte, Johan, 243
slavery, 76, 150, 153
Slavicisation, 104, 148, 334
Slavs, 41, 67, 72, 84–5, 104, 117, 346
East, 112
West, 32, 70, 72, 75, 85, 112
Småland, Sweden, 67
Smirnov, N. I., 355
snakes, 2, 101, 136, 138, 145–6, 187, 194, 197, 199–201, 204–5, 211, 213–14, 253, 264, 267–8, 314
sodytsyat (soothsayers), 107
Solonainen, Ericus Erici, 180
sorcery. *See* witchcraft
Soviet Union (USSR), 16, 345, 356, 362
Sovij, myth of, 83
Spain, 152, 168
Speratus, Paul, 206
St Anthony's Day, 245
St Bartholomew's Day, 245
St Catherine's Day, 237

St George's Day, 186, 194, 298
St George's Night Uprising (1343), 75–6, 112, 183
St John's Night, 51, 188–9, 191, 244, 313
St Laurence's Day, 245
St Mark's Day, 237
St Martin's Day, 133, 189, 306, 317
St Matthew's Day, battle of (1217), 98
St Olaf's Day, 245
St Peter's Day, 315
St Petersburg, Russia, 95, 214, 297, 301, 352
Statius, 206
statutes, synodal, 123, 125–6, 140, 182
Stender, Gotthard Friedrich, 307–9
Stephen I, king of Hungary, 72
Stockholm, Sweden, 233, 363
stones, sacred, 35, 46, 91, 99, 101, 123, 145, 176, 178–9, 182, 190, 199, 211, 221, 225, 243–5, 263–4, 270–1, 295–6, 298–9, 303, 314–16, 329, 343–4, 352, 359–60, 362, 371–2
Stoorjunkare (Sámi deity), 238–9
Strasbourg, France, 232
Stribingius, Joannes, 257–9
Stryjkowski, Maciej, 205–6, 208, 342
Stüler, Johannes (Erasmus Stella), 192, 252
Subary (festival), 306
Sudovian Book, 193
Sudovians. *See* Yotvingians
Suliszones (festival), 305
superstition, 55, 95, 126, 168, 192, 224, 235, 239, 242, 247, 249, 253, 274, 281, 287–8, 318
Sutton Hoo, England, 23
Suviekas, Lithuania, 198
Svarožic (Slavic deity), 68
Svetovit (Slavic deity), 69
Sweden, 60, 73, 90–1, 96–7, 124, 151, 166, 169–70, 172–3, 176–7, 184, 223, 230, 232–3, 235, 242, 269, 281, 290, 294, 329
Swedish Crusades, 95–7
syncretism, 20, 22, 26, 153, 220, 231, 356
Szawinski, Jerzy, 266–8, 313
Szyszkowski, Marcin, bishop of Płock, 274

Taara (Estonian deity), 345, 365
Taara usk (Estonian native faith movement), 345
Tabor, Albertus, bishop of Vilnius, 146
Tacitus, 92, 118
Taino people, 56
Tallinn, Estonia, 76, 249, 296, 300
táltos, 347
Tartu, Estonia, 243
  University of, 243
Tatars, 1, 106, 111, 138, 141, 161, 197, 204, 215–17, 219, 266, 324–5
Tauragė, Lithuania, 197
Tautvila (Lithuanian prince), 80
tax collectors, 103, 295
taxation, 102, 120–1, 173, 297, 322, 326, 350–1
  relief from, 320, 322, 324
temples, 12–13, 18, 41, 68, 83, 136, 269, 344
Tenerife, Canary Islands, 153, 155–8, 162, 269, 289

Tengri (Turkic deity), 108
Tengrism, 108
Teriushovo, Russia, 322
Teutonic Knights, 2, 72–3, 75, 78, 82, 89, 102, 113–15, 126–7, 131–3, 135, 151, 161, 166, 181, 191–2, 194, 250, 253
  Livonian branch of, 99, 190
Teutonic Order, 80–1, 129–30
Thecla, St, 308
theosophy, 346
therianthropy, 99, 107, 201
Thiess of Kaltenbrun (werewolf), 261
Thietmar of Merseburg, 68
Thirty Years' War, 234
Thor (Norse deity), 239, 293
thunder, worship of, 182, 188, 213, 248–9, 253, 313–14
Thurn, Christian von, 248
Tjallekino, Russia, 214
toads, 187
Tobacco, Mother of (Latvian deity), 26, 363
Toland, John, 287
toleration, religious, 139, 326, 356
Tolkien, J. R. R., 337
Tõnn (Estonian deity), 298–9
Tornaeus, Johannes, 240
Tornio, Sweden, 121
Toste (missionary to the Sámi), 120
totemism, 58, 253
Trakai, Lithuania, 138
trance states, 92, 94, 164, 172, 175–6, 185, 229, 240–1
Transylvania, 317
trees, sacred, 35, 100–1, 107, 123, 137, 139, 150, 158, 178–9, 182, 188–9, 192, 198–201, 205, 209–11, 213, 221, 225, 250, 254–5, 258–9, 264, 297, 302–6, 322–3, 360, 362, 372
Treniota, grand duke of Lithuania, 82
Trentowski, Bronisław, 334–5
Trifon (missionary to the Sámi), 178
trolls, 237
Tromsø, Norway, 20, 61–2
Trondenes, Norway, 293
Trondheim, Norway, 89, 293
Troyes, France, 71
Tumopaz (Mordvin deity), 107
Tura (Mordvin deity), 108
tuxatmăš (Chuvash sorcerer), 108
Tyszkiewicz, Antoni Dominik, bishop of Samogitia, 312

Udmurt people, 3, 64–5, 107, 110–12, 148, 214–16, 218, 324–5, 351–2
Ukapirmas (Baltic deity), 206
Ukko (Finnic deity), 180, 249
Ukraine, 1, 79, 99, 376
Unitarianism, 196
Uppsala, Sweden, 96, 232, 240
Ural Mountains, 59–60, 63, 87, 103, 106, 110, 320
urbanisation, 217
Urvaste, Estonia, 248
Ürzhüm, Russia, 352–3
Ustiug, Russia, 104
Užusieniai, Lithuania, 315

Vabalninkas, Lithuania, 316
Vadsø, Norway, 230
Vadstena, Sweden, 170
vaidilas (Lithuanian priests), 1, 221
Vaidulionai, Lithuania, 316
Valdemar II, king of Denmark, 98
Valka, Latvia, 306

Valkendorf, Erik, archbishop of Trondheim, 172
Valmiera, Latvia, 189, 309
Varanger, Norway, 230
Vardø, Norway, 172
Vasilev, Nesmeian, 323
Vasilii III, grand prince of Moscow, 176
Vastseliina, Estonia, 245
Vaygach Island, Russia, 103, 163
Veceles (festival), 305
Veckenstedt, Edmund, 363
Vējonis, Raimonds, 378
Velinės (festival), 21
Velnias (Baltic deity), 255
Vepsians, 97
Vestal Virgins, 206
Viborg, Russia, 97
Viera y Clavijo, José de, 152, 288–9
Vijayanagara Empire, 169
Vikings, 4, 68, 80
Vilkija, Lithuania, 211
Vilnia, river, 2, 83
Vilnius, Lithuania, 1–3, 31, 82–3, 134, 199, 203, 206, 262–4, 268–9, 281, 311–12, 314–17
  University of, 196, 200, 207, 341
Vīlums, Jānis, 304
Vincentians, 316
Vinland, 85
Virgil, 144, 203
Viryava (Mordvin deity), 107
Visigoths, 65
visitations, episcopal, 140, 158, 210–12, 243, 245, 265–7, 269, 274, 293, 298
Vistula, river, 100, 114, 314
Visuomybė (Lithuanian religious movement), 345
Visvaldis (Latvian leader), 102
Vitus, St, 69
Vladimir, Russia, 110
Vladimir-Suzdal, Russia, 111
Voipel (Komi deity), 105
Voit, David, 194
Volga, river, 64, 104, 107, 109, 215–17, 276, 320, 367
  Great Bend of, 106, 110
Vologda, Russia, 110
Võrumaa, Estonia, 248, 301, 360
Votians, 3, 65, 97
Vulcan (Roman deity), 318
Vyatka, river, 104, 148
Vyatka Land, 111, 148
Vychegda, river, 104
Vydūnas (Vilius Storostas-Vydūnas), 345–6
Vym, river, 104
Vytautas, grand duke of Lithuania, 114–15, 130, 132, 137–41, 158, 336

Wagner, Richard, 4
Wallund, Erasmus, 294
weather magic, 172, 175, 348
weddings. *See* marriage
weideler (Prussian priests), 190
wejones, 255
Wends, 71–2
werewolves, 184–7, 249, 260–1
Westen, Thomas von, 293–4
Whitaker, Alexander, 174
White Sea, 95
Wigand of Marburg, 76
Wijuk Kojałowicz, Wojciech, 275
William of Rubruck, 85, 88
wind, selling of, 85–6, 171–2
Wit, bishop of the Lithuanians, 89
witchcraft, 4, 10–11, 46, 52–3, 56, 86, 174–7, 182, 210–11, 224–5, 232–4, 239–42, 254, 259–60, 268, 276, 279, 283, 310

paganism classified as, 316
trials for, 44, 183, 225, 229–30, 247–9, 271–3, 275, 311–12
witch-hunting, 168, 222–3, 240, 242, 272
Włodkowic, Paweł, 116, 130–3, 169, 207
wolves, 186, 203
Wunderer, Johann David, 201

Yotvingians, 83, 100, 166, 192–4, 252, 263
as 'Old Lithuanians', 274, 313–14, 317
Yule Log, 307
yumšă (Chuvash spiritual leader), 108

Žagarė, Lithuania, 311
Zapyškis, Lithuania, 269
Zazinek (festival), 194
Zbruch idol, 70
Žemėpatis (Baltic deity), 101
žeminės (Lithuanian spirits), 267
Žemyna (Baltic deity), 188, 201, 211, 213, 221, 298, 303–4, 316
Ziegler, Jacob, 171–3, 175, 177
Zinaŭ, Viačasłaŭ, 313–14